

**Sweet  
POWER**

**GIRLIE**

pretty

*Femmes d'Esprit*

the  
**leading  
lady**

perfect curls

**Virgin**

IS FICTION,

WHO AM I?

the  
**princess**

TO ME  
I'm  
NOT YOURS

**FOXY**  
**BREAST  
ENLARGEMENT**

**SISTER**

WHO AM I?

**MOTHER**

Excavation of  
Woman

CNR Honors Magazine / Fall 2002/ Issue 2



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## From the Editor

In my heart, I think a woman has two choices: either she's a feminist or a masochist.

~Gloria Steinem

"As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world."

~Virginia Woolf

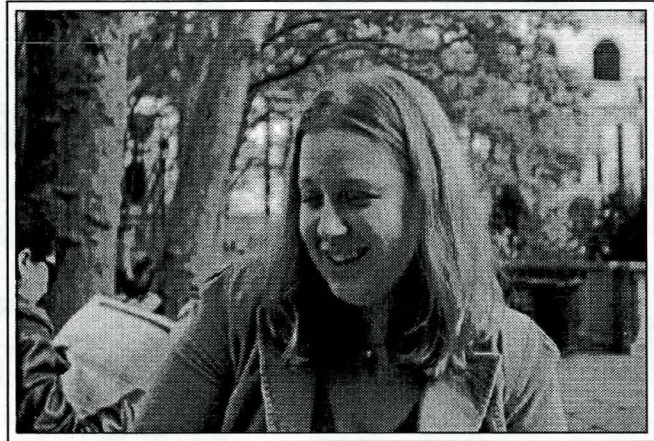


photo: Cynthia Kraman

When I arrived at my adulthood, I thought the question standing before me was, am I a feminist? As any newly-minted eighteen year old, I was confident I knew who I was, considering I felt I lived a pretty self-aware life, and college was about earning a degree, not radically changing the way I think. I was so confident I described in detail how I was coping with a painful romantic breakup, evolving from high school couplehood to college freedom.

Then, I was assigned to analyze what I had just written, challenging what I thought I believed, forcing me to evaluate who I was and gaining a new major in the process.

My investigation of femininity did not end when I arrived at The College of New Rochelle, in fact, it had just begun. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *To the Light-*

*house* were novels which forced me to consider how identities are constructed, in particular the identities of women who's interactions with a kaleidoscope of personalities demanded I as the reader, examine who I was as an individual. Recent graduate Vera Cherynsheva ('02) structured a panel discussion for *Myths We Live By* in the Spring 2001, asking if feminism was dead or alive. I was shocked at the suggestion a movement, theory, ideology I was so saturated in maybe past its expiration date. I understand more fully the implication of the question now, is feminism still relevant to young women?

Sigmund Freud famously demanded to know what women want, and Simone de Beauvoir challenged him by first asking what is a woman? We all know the importance of defining terms. This issue of *Femmes d'Esprit* is a col-

lected investigation of de Beauvoir's question: uncovering the complexity of what exactly woman is. I would like to thank each of the contributors and the entire Honors and College's community's intellectual for continuing the discussion.

*Richelle Fiore*

Richelle Fiore, Editor in Chief



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# Life's Other Things

Tara Devlin

When Richelle asked me if I had anything to say about the subject of sex and femininity for the next issue of *Femmes*, I rolled my eyes and said, "Oh God, not again." You can't escape this subject here, ever. It seems like in each of my classes we repeat the same discussion every day, somehow it will all relate back to gender roles and/or the Garden of Eden. I have no problem with this during class, and it's not that I'm in favor of repression, but variety is the spice of life my friends. I think we could enlist a little bit of it when we're going to decide on themes which dictate what we write about. (Ok, you're thinking it's all necessary, feminism is life, this is a women's college after all, and where was I when they planned these things anyway, hmmm? Yeah you have a point, but so do I.)

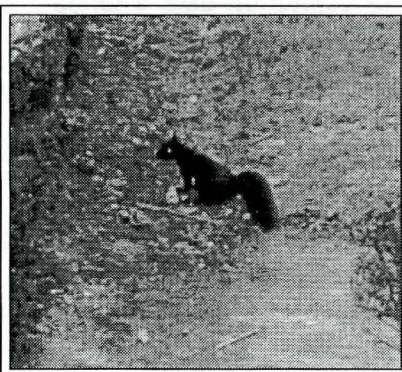


photo: Tara Devlin

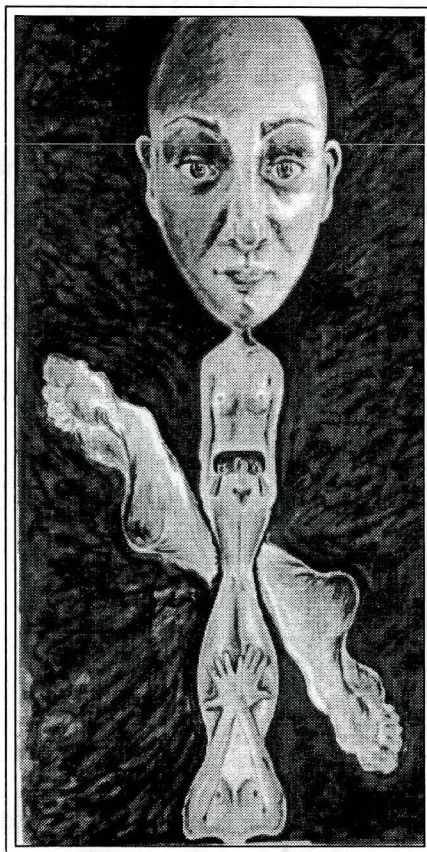
I am going to go against the theme and talk about some good things in life that have nothing to do with sex, femininity, feminism, communism, capitalism, women, men, the war with Iraq, George Bush, values, society, whether or not women exist, the big looming mass overhead made up of all of the above, or even theories of any kind. I can look around me right now and find twenty million other things I can talk about and never mention any of the hot topics around here. Variety, people, variety.

Lucky Charms. Lucky Charms are so good, aren't they? Name me one thing better than Lucky Charms. Puppies. Babies. Kittens. Good Music. Ice cream. Isn't this fun? Isn't it nice to watch squirrels digging up acorns? They don't do that where I come from. Well I guess they must, because all squirrels eat, but one never sees them do it. Maybe it's because one does not walk from place to place through the grass, which is a shame. That's the great thing about a small campus, the walk from place to place is not so long that you start to complain to yourself, instead you can notice things like squirrels. Where I



come from you can't walk anywhere, unless you figure in an hour or more of house after house of manicured lawns, and you miss out. And I'm from Long Island where everything is squished together. Although that's probably relative: in the suburbs things become even more far-flung. This is why I started to acquire the terrible habit of driving everywhere. I have a short attention span for looking at house after house, especially when they were all built by the same architect at the same time. At least driving I can listen to music, and sing, and think about things like this, and the meanings of the lyrics and what-not. So can you see how squirrels and technology and analyzing things and singing songs all relate together?

"We're all connected like a Lego set," says the Beastie Boys, and I really think that's true. Everything is connected and when you look at something and you just keep finding layer after layer of meaning in it and you see how it relates to everything else it's like unwrapping a present. But then some things are just messy, uncharmingly complicated, heavy, and confusing. They run you around in circles and you never get anywhere, rather like one of those little plastic puzzles where you have to slide the pieces around to put the picture in order. Those



Untitled, Emily Williams

things drive me crazy; why can't you just leave it the way it is? Sometimes it looks nicer that way. So when that happens you just have to stop and think about something else, such as Lucky Charms, or squirrels, or the block letters you're drawing.

Although, Lucky Charms are not safe because you could spend all day analyzing them if you wanted to (there must be a whole tangle of stuff going on with all those symbols). It's all constructed by symbols. Hearts, stars, rain-

bows, how does that song go? Not to mention it's sugary, sold using a massive stereotype of an ancient culture; all part of some big plot to pacify the children of the masses, so they grow up numbed and pacified and complacent. The world is headed downhill so fast. Oh god I think I'm losing my mind this time...Adam Yauch knows how I feel:

*"What's pleasing to the eye in the delusion of my sight is not what I find when I reach into the light; I have lost my mind...I'm walking through time, deluded as the next guy, pretending and hoping to find that distant peace of mind"*

(I Don't Know)

The Beastie Boys and I are convinced that we are losing our minds, but I think it's just a euphemism for being overwhelmed by your thoughts sometimes. I think they agree with me.



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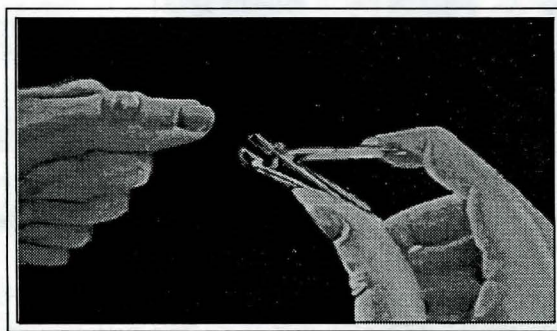
# Jar Full of Mixed Candy

Kathryn Tyranski

It's a sad thing to say society portrays us as sex objects. Some people may very well disagree with this point of view but I can't. As I look around the many aspects of society's magazines, television, music, I can't deny its validity. Take Britney Spears for example, not the personae, but her music. One of her most recent hits, *I'm a Slave 4 U*, is a perfect choice. The song's chorus states: "I'm a slave for you/I cannot hide it/I cannot control." She implies women belong to men, and I personally refuse to belong to anyone. There are reasons why women have their own minds and choice of actions.

One of my favorite things I hear all the time when it comes to relationships is "it's what's inside that counts." This is may be true but in reality does not happen. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was a radar for a great personality? As far as I know though, there isn't one. I don't care what anyone says, you are ultimately attracted to a person because of their looks. It is very human to like a

well-kept, good-looking person, then, we meet their personality and sometimes the thought of jumping ship passes through our minds.



*Self Portrait, Amy Perry*

Magazines and television don't help us either. Ads in these mediums have models which are usually thin and flawless. I just keep telling myself, yes—they are airbrushed—but sometimes it gets in. With opportunities to buy products and services to increase our sexuality and appeal, sometimes it is hard not to give into temptation. I recently was in a shopping mall and saw a sign in front of a store that advertised free breast makeovers to make your chest as attractive as possible. Is that really necessary and more importantly possible? Let's not even talk about plastic surgery where

one can be stuffed and plucked like a Thanksgiving turkey.

In the musical *A Chorus Line*, the character of Val sings, "tits and ass won't get you jobs, unless they're yours." It's nice to fabricate a world where personality and talent reign supreme, but that isn't our truth. Who gives people the right to judge us based on our looks? We should be the only judges; after all, the bodies are supposed to be ours. Unfortunately, many of us give into society's advertisements for the latest make-up and products to make us irresistible, because "we are worth it."

And society can affect us not only physically, but mentally too. Everyone has their moments of low self-esteem (no thanks to society), but some fall into anorexia and bulimia to achieve this so-called perfect body. As women (and even guys too) we need to evaluate ourselves and be happy with the people we are. It's not an easy task to undertake, tackling the wrongs of society, but it is better than burying the true people that we are.



# Growing Up Virgin

Shirley Del Valle

To give it up or not to give it up, that my friend, is the frickin question. There are two beliefs I grew up with in regards to virginity and sex, the religious one which my parents forced upon me, and the social one which I chose to believe. I was raised with the belief, as most girls are to "save herself" till her wedding night. However I ascribe to the social belief, you know the one I'm talking about girl, the one about high school, where a girl is supposed to find her sweet heart, date him and then give him some booty on prom night. Young girls, like my naive self, are led to believe this really dumb idea the culture we live in has created. But I'd like to let you in on a little secret-it's not true, girls are having sex way before prom time.

As the years go by it becomes more difficult to believe that abstinence is a cool thing and even harder to remain a virgin. Most of my friends in high school were, how can I say this, "deflowered" and became "women" when they were just fifteen years old. I felt like such a dork as the only virgin in the group.

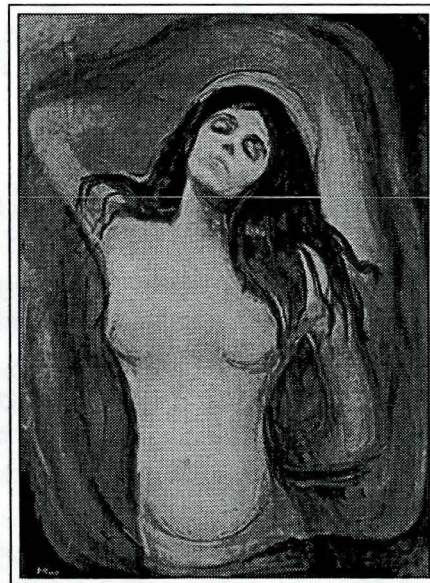
I ask myself, where the hell did they find the balls to give away

their virginity to someone. I don't get it- don't they fear sexually transmitted and deadly diseases as well as pregnancy? Is it that being a virgin isn't cool anymore? Could it be all the peer pressure? Are girls, especially young ones having more sex now in the present time than they were 20 years ago, or are they just more verbal about their sex lives?

I'm sure many girls have heard stories of virgins being sacrificed, thrown into fires and volcanoes. These stories scared and continue to scare the crap out of me.

I strongly believe that Hollywood promotes sex and promiscuity, maybe that's why being a virgin isn't cool anymore. In the movie *Cruel Intentions*, the hottie Sebastian played by Ryan Phillippe is on a mission to deflower Reese Witherspoon's character, Annette, which he eventually does.

Britney Spears claims to be a virgin. Ha! That's the best joke I've ever heard. In all her videos and performances there is one theme that is clearly evident-SEX. In my opinion Ms. Spears uses sex as a tease. And the sexual teasing leads me to believe that she is no virgin. She shakes what her mama gave her, strips on stage, and use



*Madonna*, Edvard Munch

to live with one of the hottest men in the industry. Yet she continues to claim she is a virgin. What she does in her bedroom or on top of her kitchen table, is none of my business. What bugs me is that she's a role model for twelve year old girls. These little girls want to dress, act and dance like her. If she wants people to believe in her virginity why doesn't she try to tone down her sexuality on stage. Don't get me wrong, every woman wants to feel sexy, but if you act a certain way, dance provocatively and have half of your outfit missing, people are going to believe you're an active sexual being.

SEX is everywhere and SEX sells. It sells TV shows, music, movies and magazines. I use to love Dawson's Creek, which for

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# Lesbian Envy

Samantha Young

As I walked down a field near campus one day I could see two distinct dots in the distance. As I neared I saw the two dots become one for a moment and I longed for it to remain. It gets lonely on my island. I walked deliberately closer to their Eden, feeling their passion nearly 300 yards away. I hadn't thought of bringing my glasses so I couldn't clearly see them, but I could catch sips of their tender conversation. Both of the voices sounded surprisingly familiar—and female. I finally reached a fine viewing point, they had not yet noticed my curiosity, and I watched. Voyeurism has never been my fetish but there was something between them I coveted, that something I have yet to find. My only problem is my mate is going to need a deeper voice and a bit more hair on his chest.

Now I have to admit I don't find females appealing but sometimes I wish I did. It gets lonely; being a straight girl in an all women's institution which can be a bit disheartening. If only I were a lesbian I might not be alone; I might have a chance here. I need a man though. There is just something in his hard, penetrating eyes that women don't quite have.

My father always made me want

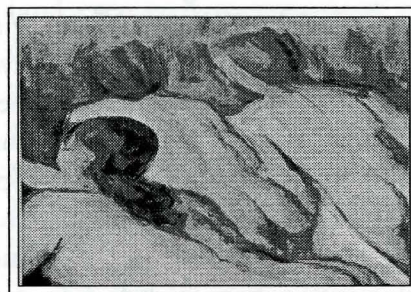
to find the "right one" in college. I don't doubt he did this with the same hopes as all fathers. He wanted me to find a man bound for success. I will admit a man with a goal is strongly appealing but it is not of the utmost importance. Perhaps I have set my standards too high, but I have yet to find the right one. It is even more difficult here at the College of New Rochelle than it ever was in high school. Just once, just once I would like to decline spending time with my friends because I have a date. Sadly, that may never happen.

I suppose there are many fun and interesting ways to meet men. Unfortunately, all of them simply aren't compatible with a girl whose heart gallops at the thought of an interesting young man. Clubbing is great, if you don't shake in all the wrong places when you dance. Bars are fine too, if you find dizzy drunks attractive. Nearly every other place requires some sort of action on the girl's part, and these techniques are simply not for me. So did I come to an all girls school to purposely make myself miserable? I am fine. I only covet that which I cannot have, at least I cannot have here and now.

Sometimes I would sit in the room of my lesbian neighbors and

watch how they were with each other. It was surprisingly similar to my previous relationships. The differences are mainly fundamental, so why am I so personally unaffected by the sight of a naked female body? I won't deny I find women beautiful and I challenge anyone who won't find their own sex at least aesthetic to be fiercely homophobic or simply asexual. Yet I cannot find my own sex arousing or even tempting. I feel the need to emphasize that I do not dismiss the notion of a person finding their own sex desirable, I merely do not share in those feelings.

Why be jealous of a way of life so generously persecuted and legally discriminated against? Maybe I too would love to rebel against a senseless society by simply being myself. I too wish to crusade against all those conservative politicians whose Puritanical doctrine



*Bathers, Paul Cézanne*



prevents a whole subculture from their inalienable human rights. I can only fight with the strength of my own empathy and beliefs, not with the experience and angst of the suppressed way of life. I will never be able to presume I know the pain of being called a "fag." However, I can at least lend my aggression to the cause. I may never enjoy a passionate affair with a woman, but I can still defend such endeavors. I would be able to find a cause to rebel against and in my current situation, I may be able to come back to school on the arms of my lesbian lover instead of my stuffy dorm room.

So I choose to walk the halls of the buildings on my campus and sigh as single prospects wander around me. I am immune to their sexuality, not by choice, but by nature. I will accept my fate and aspire to some day find my love-perhaps in a co-ed graduate school.

### Secret

Secret, you are a clever thing  
In the circles you've got me to run  
Excitement in that song you sing  
Indication of the joys to come

Secret, you will give in to me  
This courage of yours I admire  
We will hide from eyes that see  
In you, Secret, I aspire

Secret, you are a lover of games  
But I will master your strategy and play  
Innocence, one of your many claims  
But your inner thoughts beg me to stay

Your words are like the ocean floor  
Changing with every current and wave  
But those eyes are your soul's back door  
And this truth you can no longer save.

I watch your lips as they move  
Urging me on with their temptation  
I know now I have much to prove  
With my promise to reach a higher elevation

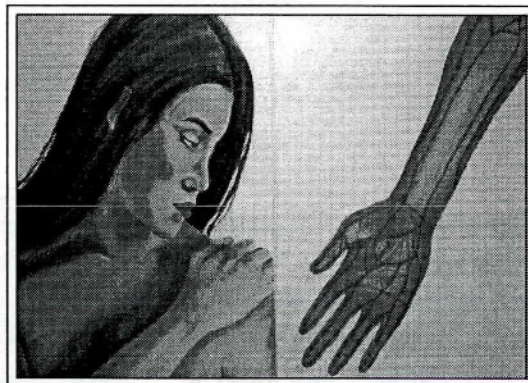
If my eyes say I want you, see it  
It can be seen everyday  
If they say I want to kiss you, believe it  
Take this initiative today

--Ruth Santiago



# Stepping Stones

Alana Ruptak



Self Portrait, Alana Ruptak

And it happens so earnestly, so fast over spans of time. We are born. Little girls in frilly pink dresses, “so cute,” they say and we make them all laugh. We grow in mind and body. We develop. Our body changes, a metamorphosis of sorts. Same skin, yet serving a different form of protection as it did previously. “You’ll be a heartbreaker,” they say at the first tear drop shed for that cute boy who didn’t look at us on the bus that day. Our eyes divert to magazines and that box of screaming bright flashing images for guidance on how to act, who to be.

Our clothes, “no more pink,” we say, they define who we are. *I am sorry to inform you but the dictionary redefined a few terms:*

*slut- 1. the girl who develops a little faster than the rest 2. the girl who wears the short skirt and tight top 3. the girl who is who you want to be.*

You’ll be a heartbreaker they said. We are on the prowl. Calling all boys (or girls): attractive, fun, interested in me. We wear our desires on our shirt, an easy target but perhaps, we realize the easy focal point our developments now serve. That first look, that first date

it sends our mind spinning. We think it is love as we fall down a dark shaft of illogical bliss.

Open minded, open hearted. We read all the magazines that were made to capture our gaze and our wallets but failed to realize they were written for women twice our age. *Did I mention I am still just a girl?* We continue to fall and we like the feeling for we mistake it for freedom. We land, thinking we have hit home- hit a reality of “this is forever” and “I love you.” These words speak to us in the form of bed sheets and twin bed mattresses. Open minded, open hearted, open legged.

“I love you” and we take in this “love” in transpires of emotion, of disbelief that someone could love us just that much. Just that much and we are born. Our childhood retreats behind us and we enter this land of limbo. We are not adult and we are no longer child.

The search continues. *I am sorry to inform you there has been another revision:*

*slut- 1. the girl who didn’t say no 2. the girl who did what we all talk about doing; hero: the man(ages 13 and up) who just loved the girl*

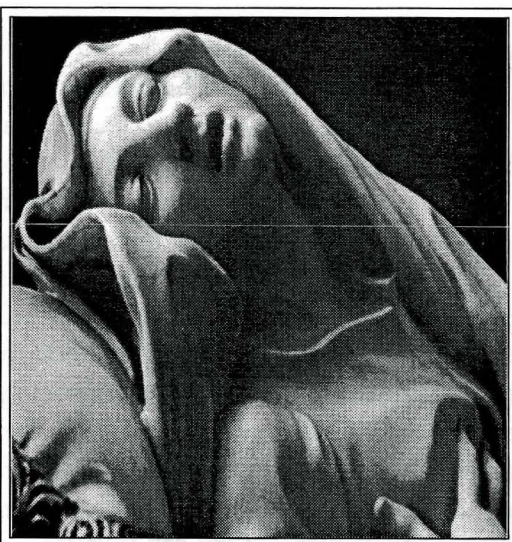
too much to let her say no 3. the man who called the girl slut.

*I am sorry but proud to inform you but I didn’t want to say no and just a reminder but the word no is also in his vocabulary. I will not justify my actions just because I am the one who “receives” or feel like I did something wrong when he and the action we performed together are prized on a pedestal for praise. Are you telling me my virginity is a stepping stone for his masculinity?*

There must be something wrong with us. All these girls are giving in, not wanting to say no, not wanting to save ourselves—excuse me but what are we saving ourselves from? Mask your desires please, conduct yourself appropriately, you don’t want to give others the wrong impression. Good girls just don’t do these sorts of things. We are claiming ourselves and recognizing our independences. We want to add the match to the flaming fire, no matter how bad it might burn. We

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*The Blessed Ludovica Albertoniti*  
Gianlorenzo Bernini

He's got that look in his eye  
And who can say no to a face like that  
So I make him think it was my idea  
Pretty soon I feel awfully warm  
He looks happy, if not in a little pain  
I'm not feeling' too bad myself  
Talk about the body electric  
Pay attention, now, focus  
Look up at him demurely, smile  
But my little eyes, smile  
While doing something not  
so innocent  
Slowly, lets not get ahead...  
Nevermind that's just fine  
In fact, that's a little bit more than fine  
Hell, it's damn great  
Warm, warm, very, very warm  
Yes, yes, yes "scratch"  
Oops, got a little carried away there  
I hope that doesn't leave a scar  
It didn't seem to bother him  
He's still going  
What on earth is he doing?  
Oh, that, nice.  
--Amy Perry

### They Don't Know

We finally did it, that boundary swept away  
One word paradise explains that day  
Tired of the wait, sick of the game  
Wanting something more, enough of the same  
First so timid, now hard to tame  
A steady groove an explosion came  
No time to waste done in haste  
Worthy of all danger, a tender first taste  
They tried to stop us with rules and regulation  
They could of stopped us in this taken situation  
A sensual simulation we shared day by day  
I can't believe we are here play by play  
I told you the truth blanketed in desire  
I can't take it anymore racing for the fire  
We are not supposed to be not in this place  
You are taken and I am a lost case  
Danger so deep reality so clear  
We are no longer bound by an aging fear  
They will not see, they will not know  
It is our little secret let it flow  
An increase in speed a lingering need  
Moving toward you I take the lead  
You cling, bend, and lean  
I faster float up that stream  
Towards the door I glance just in case  
No one saw us, we concluded this mutual chase  
--Ruth Santiago



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# Portrait of an American Schizophrenic as a Young Girl

Michael Quinn, Department of Communication Arts

As college students – as youth in America – you are all in the process of becoming. Childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood are all structured as states you must pass through in becoming something else: adult, employed, married, parents, relevant. Because of this, your present concerns and interests – in fact the concerns and interests of everyone your age – seem somehow less important. What is significant is not the reality of your ideas and feelings but that you exist in some sort of cocoon state, ready to burst forth as a valid member of society.

There may be a “natural” “genetic” component to this. After all, children grow up; people do seem to change more quickly when they are younger. But there is some-

thing peculiarly cultural about the way non-adults have been marginalized in recent American society. Because they will soon be something other than what they are, children, teens, and young adults have historically (at least over the last fifty years) been considered somehow less than significant. The meaning of the teen lies in her potential (to be something other than she is) and her symbolic meaning (teen as innocence, etc.), rather than in her reality.

While this ideological representation of youth remains in force, over the last ten years there has been a vast change in how youth is perceived, represented, and, in fact, marketed. To understand this you have to understand the new significance of culture both in America and in the global community. America is increasingly in the “culture” business – it is in the business of producing and marketing culture to the world. America’s culture industry is by far its most significant export ideologically, and is rapidly becoming so economically. Television, music, movies, the Internet: these are no longer merely forms of entertainment but crucial determining fac-

tors in how we understand the world, how the world understands us, and how we define ourselves as individuals.

There are numerous aspects to what has come to be called the “cultural turn.” One can investigate the way America sells images of itself abroad. One can study how issues such as race and gender are increasingly played out on movie screens and on the radio – *8 Mile* being only the most recent example. However I would like to return to the issue of youth culture, which is creating a generation—if not a society—of schizophrenics. The reason for bringing America into the discussion is quite simply that American culture is increasingly selling an image of youth. Ironically, it is selling the same image of youth that it has marginalized for decades.

“I’m not a girl, not yet a woman” is one of Britney Spear’s most recent hit singles. It encapsulates—most obviously in the title but throughout the song—the contradiction of youth today. Britney—and like her, millions of young women (and men, to switch genders for a second)—is in a process



*Angel*



of becoming. She's not at the early stage of childhood but she's not yet an adult: she's somewhere in between. This is precisely the marginal state I depicted earlier, where teens and young adults are taken less seriously because of their future status as adults. However, this *cri de couer* encapsulates Britney's appeal; the appeal, in fact, of youth itself in today's culture. The reason youth has been historically marginalized is the *same reason* youth culture has begun to dominate popular culture in general.

It sucks to be young, to be told continuously you have to become something else, that your dreams are ridiculous, or you can't possibly understand something until you are older. However, this transient, ephemeral position youth is placed in is becoming the primary marketing device of the youth culture. Britney is only the most obvious example of this attempt to market and sell an image of youth-as-becoming. Her image—which continually shifted from innocent to flirty and sexual—even more so than her music was the arena where this played out.

Think about the number of times you heard the following: "when is Britney-N\*Sync-Backstreet going to become adult and start appealing to adult audiences? Can *they* themselves grow up while remaining successful?" What is interesting about this question is not the answer—all pop

acts lose popularity eventually—rather, it is that the question *itself* which became a fundamental aspect of these groups' images: what will they be when they grow up? Along with this is the concomitant idea that once they grow up—once Britney stops being flirty-coy and starts being sexual, once the Backstreet Boys are either married or in rehab—they are no longer interesting. It is the process of becoming—Britney's being "in between"—that is significant.

This dual emphasis—demanding a rapid transition to adulthood while simultaneously valorizing the choices, opportunities, and very ephemerality of being young—is the dominant mode of youth culture. The significance of this is that youth culture no longer is merely for the young; it has become the major cultural force in our society. Youth culture dominates music more than ever. It totally informs advertising—even Jaguar commercials are aimed at a youth market. And it is increasingly prominent in film and television.

Thus our society of schizophrenics. Young people are simultaneously told they don't matter, their issues and concerns are irrelevant; simultaneously they are bombarded with images that imply that youth is all that matters. Adults are in a similar bind as they are increasingly forced to identify with an age and a mindset

that has passed them by. And believe me, adults have never been made

more aware that youth has passed them by than today.

The consequences of this trend in youth culture are as yet unclear. Perhaps the most obvious is the way young adults are again experimenting with drugs, sex, and sexuality; it has never been more perplexing to be young (or old) than today, and teens and young adults have to make choices and ask questions (am I gay?) that used to be taken for granted. This is not necessarily a negative; it certainly adds to the kaleidoscope of shifting identities in American culture, if only because there is no longer a standard-bearing identity to which all others are measured. White adult American males may still be dominant in business and politics but they are increasingly marginalized in our culture. Perhaps the dethroning of the white adult male might prove to be the greatest gift of Britney Spears. Excluding low-rise jeans, of course.

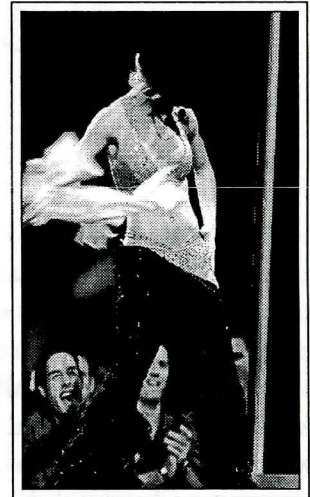


photo: mrv.com



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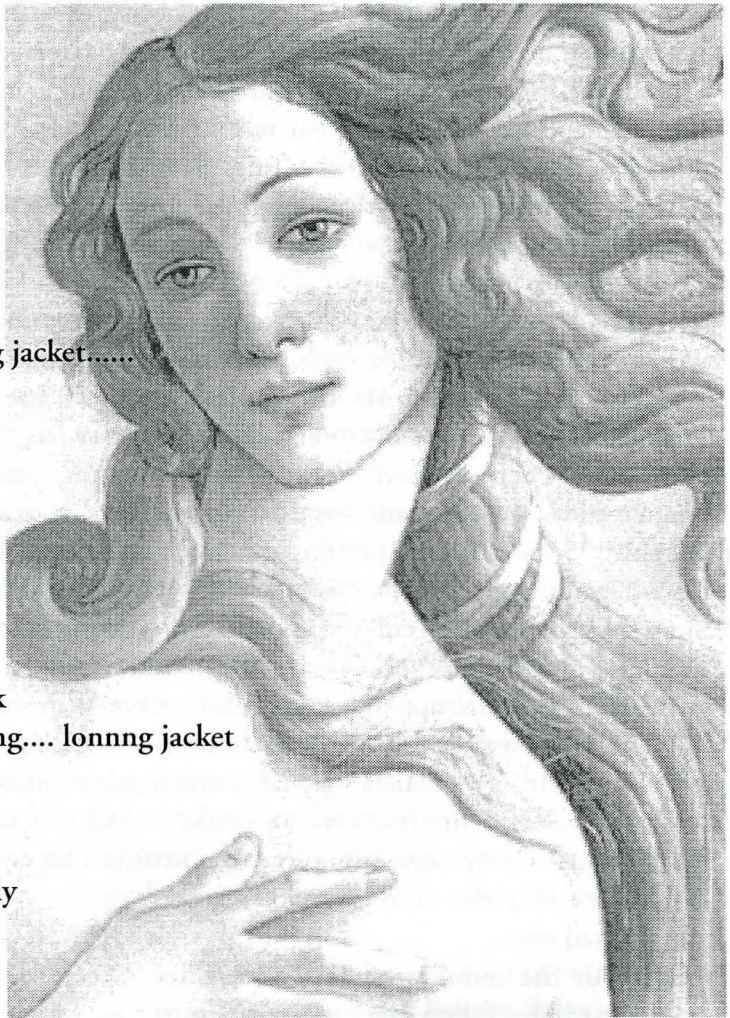
# Cultural Facades

## Short Skirt/Long Jacket

I want a girl with a mind like a diamond  
I want a girl who knows what's best  
I want a girl with shoes that cut  
And eyes that burn like cigarettes  
I want a girl with the right allocations  
Who's fast and thorough and sharp as a tack  
She's playing with her jewelry  
She's putting up her hair  
She's touring the facility  
And picking up slack  
I want a girl with a short skirt and a lonnnng jacket.....

I want a girl who gets up early  
I want a girl who stays up late  
I want a girl with uninterrupted prosperity  
Who uses a machete to cut through red tape  
With fingernails that shine like justice  
And a voice that is dark like tinted glass  
She is fast and thorough and sharp as a tack  
She's touring the facility and picking up slack  
I want a girl with a short skirt and a lonnnnng.... lonnnng jacket

I want a girl with a smooth liquidation  
I want a girl with good dividends  
And at the city bank we will meet accidentally  
We'll start to talk when she borrows my pen  
She wants a car with a cupholder arm rest  
She wants a car that will get her there  
She's changing her name from Kitty to Karen  
She's trading her MG for a white Chrysler LeBaron  
I want a girl with a short skirt and a lonnnnggggggggg jacket



Nananah Nananah Nananah Nananah Nananah  
~Cake, *Comfort Eagle* (2001)



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# A Woman's Worth: Positioning Feminist Theory in Praxis

Richelle Fiore

You could buy me diamonds, you  
could buy me pearls/ Take me on a  
cruise around the world/  
Baby you know I'm worth it/  
You will lose if you choose to refuse  
to put her first/ She will if she can't  
find a man who knows her worth,  
Alicia Keyes, *A Woman Worth*

I'm the kinda girls that  
Hangs with the guys  
Like a fly on the wall  
With my secret eyes  
Takin' it in/ Try to be feminine with  
my makeup bag  
Watching all the sin  
No Doubt, *Hey Baby*

It would appear that feminist culture is at a proverbial crossroads. Attitudes and thoughts are diverse on this topic, considering one of our cultural figures can proclaim proudly she is "not a girl/ not yet a woman" in one breath and claim next she's a "slave for you." As a young woman myself attempting to wade through the apparent cultural schizophrenia, I find myself asking if it is accurate to privilege feminism as a viable political discourse, or is it better to consider it as a theory which has fallen out of vogue? Have the attitudes of women changed radically in the recent past to the point where feminism is not a necessary category of thought? Can I simply be content with the positionality Alicia Keyes and No Doubt differently suggest? Buy me gifts to validate my worth while I

concurrently masquerade as one of the boys?

For answers to these complex questions, one could examine one of our cultural artifacts--music. The question to follow then is, what genre of music to study? There is something that profoundly resonates about hip-hop music and mainstream America, even before Christina Aguilera felt the need to get *Dirrty* with Redman. As the medium of rap gained popularity, women began entering the discourse in several different ways, including as writers and producers. (How many popular artists desire to work with Missy?) After Dr. Dre was invited into the home with *The Chronic*, it was the cross-pollination of songstress Mariah Carey's collaboration with rap-mogul Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs which joined the

family of the living-room in suburban America. Rap needed to come in a truly friend package, who was more palatably dull than pre-breakdown Mariah Carey? Feminine thug rappers such as Lil' Kim, Foxy Brown, and Eve announced their arrival on the musical map speaking as brazenly open about sex, drugs, and violence as their male counterparts did in the early 1990s during the rise and height of gangsta rap. More women became rappers and were recognized by the musical community. In 1999, Lauryn Hill won five Grammys, including Best Hip-Hop album and Album of the Year, a record she shares with Carol King.

With the appearance of more diverse positions offered in the musical canon of rap, it would appear that rap has evolved from the need for feminist steps to be taken to allow women's voices to be heard. Perhaps with numerous females participating in rap music as either object-choices for males in their videos, or asserting their own sexual prowess (Lil' Kim *How Many Licks*) and ability to provide independent financial stability (TLC *No Scrubs*, Destiny Child's

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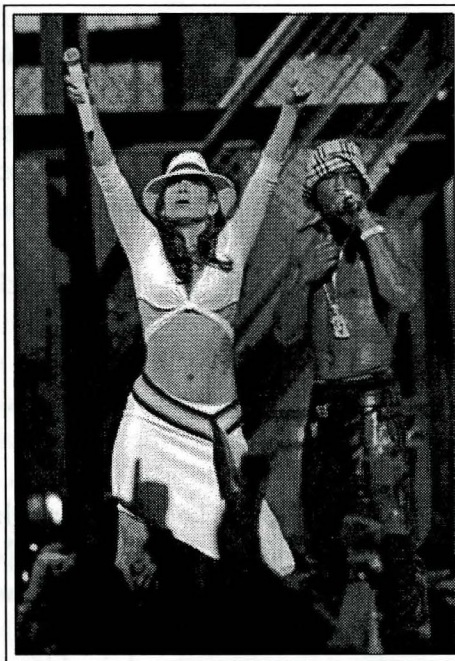


*Independent Women*), the need for help has lessened. Maybe it is the better choice to position feminist political action in rap music as passé, and consider it a philosophy that may possibly have seeped into the collective consciousness of the audience.

The French feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva argues feminism occurs in stages of consciousness that must be seen as a three-tired historical and political struggle which can be summarized as: 1. Women demand equal access to the symbolic order. Liberal feminism. Equality. 2. Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Radical feminism. Femininity extolled. 3. Women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical. (Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*.)

Ah, liberal feminism, where the goal is to illustrate the inequalities of the social system built around age-old patriarchy, demands made by women to enter into the symbolic order and have the ability to have a distinguished voice in the discourse. Mary Wollstonecraft began the argument in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 and her message echoes loudly still in Jennifer Lopez's *I'm Real*. The song's structure is a call and response between the thug Ja Rule and his fly-girl J.Lo. Her hand-picked male voice

emphasizes her physicality (The way you walk, the way you move, the way you talk/The way you stare, the way you look, your style,



Lopez and Ja Rule performing  
*I'm Real*

your hair/The way you smile, the way you smell, it drives me wild) as Lopez asserts her "realness."

Ja Rule's voice is what the viewer hears as images of Lopez are in the foreground of his scenes reaffirming her demand to be taken as the real subject of the video. The video allots Lopez the visual subjectivity of *I'm Real*, but these images cannot be separated from the gritty harshness of Ja Rule's male voice, or juxtaposition of images of his arms possessively enwrapping her. Lopez's physical attributes—walk,

talk, stare, smile, style—are the qualities that enrapture her to him. He (and the viewer) will listen to the demand made to accept her as a real subject, but cannot do much with the demand.

The song and video firmly remain liberally feminist. The demand for J.Lo to be taken as a participant in the creation of the symbolic order has been loudly made, but not necessarily listened to. She stars in the foreground of her video just as much as her male-counter part, however in the closing frames of the video, the two are sitting on the hood of a red sports car, with his head placed in her lap as they jointly sing the closing chorus. The gender roles still remain firmly in place, but the differentially of power has slightly decreased in scale.

The second stage of feminism passionately argues for women to be the center of the symbolic order. Is this simply a demand for an inversion of the original patriarchal system as culturally perceived? Theoretically, no. The shift from male dominance to gynocentrism was an attempt to correct a wrong which has been thrust upon women since Biblical times. The intention is not to eradicate the role of men, simply to reduce the scope of their power and allow women to assert some of it themselves.

AP Photo: Beth A. Keiser



Eve and Gwen Stefani propose a slightly different version of femininity in *Let Me Blow Ya Mind*. The address of the song is to women, by women. They are the two lead characters in the video terrorizing a frazzled, uptight white woman, ornamental men blindly succumbing to the feminine wiles of the siren calls. If Eve positions herself as the dominant voice in the dialogical exchange (and she is), Gwen certainly takes the more submissive role. She is perched on the back of Eve's four-wheeler, purring like a kitten, shifting to keep her body in motion as a way to hypnotize the viewer into falling in love with her. She is clad provocatively, playing up the role of the new-wave sex kitten. Dominant Eve appropriates a male fedora, but also clothes herself in a super-short white mini-dress and an untailored tan jacket in which the material drapes over her. This is a mere indulgence into the masculine fashion, not an immersion in it like Madonna's *Express Yourself* period of tailored suits.

Femininity is extolled in this world constructed by the rapper and the pop-rocker. Gwen plays with her sexuality, seducing the viewers and listeners to accept her position in the symbolic order, while Eve asserts her dominance through her skills as a rapper, and her ability to assume what would seem to be a masculine gender role. (She has dominance of Gwen

visually and lyrically.) The struggle towards a female-centered discourse has been made, but not fully achieved.

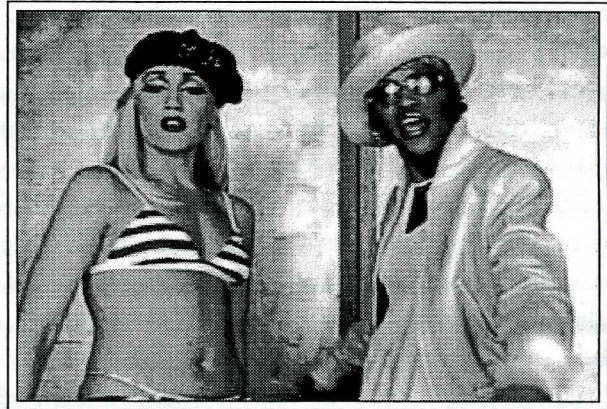
The risk of inverting patriarchy with matriarchy is a problem of radical feminism. Third-stage feminism values the political aspects of the second stage and the creation of women-centered discourse, but the need to move beyond the tight constraints of constructed gender-roles is called for in the third stage.

In a video of sexual demands and wants Missy Elliot's *One Minute Man*, sings of sexual pleasures although she has no viable romantic partner in her vicinity. She stands before her dancers wearing the same white pants with green reflector patches. In fact, it is not until the third scene that there is an introduction of a male character. An attractive, muscle-bound male is lying stretching out across a bed as the camera lustfully soaks in his form before quickly panning over to Elliot. She is in the far corner of the room, fully clothed in a jacket, jeans, and a black shirt, not your expected come-hither attire.

Instead of wooing, Elliot decapitates herself and dances with

her head in her hands to the stop-start beat of the song. The camera focuses on the dancing head before cutting back to the dance sequence in the lobby of the hotel where the video is set. When the camera pans back to the male, he looks onto the headless dancing body with confusion. What is the viewer supposed to make of these images?

*One Minute Man* is divided by



directed by Phillip Atwell

*Let Me Blow Ya Mind*, Gwen Stefani and Eve

conflict, much like us young feminists. The first two verses of the song create a theoretical space where Elliot can be free from gender constructions, powerful and sexual in the same instance. (Who needs a Madonna/Whore complex?)

However, the video becomes terrified of Elliot's proposal, and violently represses against the idea, decapitating Elliot. Resistance continues once the chorus begins with "break me off, show me what you got." The structure of the song

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slips back and forth from the resistance of the chorus, to the affirmations of Missy's lyrics. In the fourth verse of the song, Missy allows a lessening of control, saying that she is going to hand the power of the situation over to the man, as she takes flight in an orange ninja costume. When the song progresses to the chorus, her love object turns his body away from her when she approaches again in the ninja costume, rejecting her masculine construction of her gender.

The song shifts to a furious progression of drumbeats, pronouncing "what we gonna do?" asked by Missy once she finally reappears in the video. She crawls across the floor of the lobby, in an outfit similar to the uniforms of Green Berets. She is on a secretive mission, attempting to push the song toward the third stage of feminism. It never reaches that stage though. The regressive presence of guest rappers Ludacris and Trina force the song back to pre-first stage and second stage feminism, attempting to negate the diligent work of Elliot.

The song contains many conflicting elements in it. These elements work against the progression towards the third stage of feminism, yet, they work together to collapse the first two stages. Perhaps each stage does not need to be completely separate from the other. The stages can work to-

gether to attempt to reach the third stage.

The vice-like grip of media images on maybe-feminists of my generation add to the confusion of what exactly we are. A focus group of women ranging from the age of seventeen to twenty-three are in as much conflict about feminism as the rap artists employ the theories in their videos. The first challenge these women faced was in the act of defining the term, ranging from "tough women, butch-type women, or even someone not so 'butch,' like Gloria Steinem" to "man-hating lesbians."

The identification of a leading politically radical feminist in the answer reveals the popular understanding of radical feminism imbedded in the cultural consciousness, and received by young women. I mean, who wants to be a butch, man-hating lesbian anyways?

However, some of the students may understand the deconstructive impulse of third stage feminism. One young woman even offered the definition: "someone who is concerned with the issues of women and who is willing to take a stand and make changes."

Although many of the women were able to produce definitions of feminism, few were willing to self-identify as feminists. One young feminist stated "women should have the same rights and

responsibilities as men do." She operates under the third-stage of feminism; however another considers herself a fighter for "all human rights, not just women's rights." She is resistant to the label of feminism because of the connotation of being 'man-hating lesbian.' The fear of being labeled with slurs ascribed to radical feminism keeps many of the women who participated in the focus group from accepting the label of feminist.

The inability of the young women who participated in the focus group to define and accept feminist theory reflected the current contemporary culture's same inability to do the same. The collapsing of stages performed in Elliot's video also transpires when young

women attempt to define feminism. Feminist theory is in play in contemporary culture, but many of the proprietors are unaware of it.



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# New Looks for After the Fall

Nick Smart, Department of English

Hanging round downtown by myself  
and I've had too much caffeine  
and I was thinking 'bout myself and there she was  
in platform double suede there she was  
like disco lemonade there she was  
Marcy Playground's *Sex and Candy*

As I bent down to look, just opposite  
A Shape within the wat'ry gleam appear'd  
Bending to look on me, I started back It  
started back, but pleas'd I soon return'd  
Pleas'd it return'd as soon with answering looks  
Of sympathy and love; there I had fixt  
Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire  
Eve, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

Some people live in a theoretical-cultural space they call postfeminist. These souls do not, I gather, judge bias and the power differentials that attend bias to have been dismantled. They are, however, tired of all the complaining, all the hand wringing over the role, the treatment, the image of women indulged in by people who call themselves feminists. Although the entertainment value of postfeminism is extremely high, the term still makes me uneasy. Does it mean an important transformation of culture has been completed, or are we just, in the postmodern way, spinning more elaborate figures around an idea with the intention of obscuring it?

I do recognize the body language and some of the motives for a turn away from the positions of women's-movement feminism. One limitation of the feminism associated in this country with the sixties and the seventies (think

mini-skirts, tight bell-bottoms, disco dresses) is that an intellectual call for, among other things, sexual freedom, looks from the vantage point of the current moment like it dressed too doughty (think overalls, think unisex, think big bulky sweaters). Even the terms by which the political thought of this era is known are somehow unsexy. The women's movement, women's lib, gender equity. Blah. But blah for legitimate reasons.

The goal of deobjectification, of achieving for the cultural image of woman a full subjectivity, as opposed to the object status conferred by domestic-sexual practice (think aprons and tan pantyhose, think low-cut prom dress, think "I Dream of Jeanie"), may well have required the locking away of eye candy, of women's bodies as images of sexual use. This image existed (exists?) as a product of what in high theoretical speak is called

the 'male gaze.' The notion here is cultural standards of beauty were created by men as an expression of masculine desire and a means of representing gender difference. One impulse of feminist thought is then to reject the markers of gender difference (think lipstick, think high heels, think plucked eyebrows) and attempt to collapse the difference between a man's world and a woman's.

Who would argue against opening of the borders between the social arenas of men and women? Not a family in need of a second paycheck that can't afford to have a mother's place be only the home. Not parents whose daughters show early aptitude in math or science, kinds of thinking once thought to be especially difficult for women. And then, as the borders opened, and women took their places in the professions in more representative numbers, not the female lawyer, teacher, politician, who feared that

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her ideas would be noticed second, after her body (I'm talking now about a time before Reese Witherspoon and all the characters she has ever played on film). One goal of an early stage of American feminism was, as we have just discussed, to disrupt the male gaze and find another way to figure the feminine.

This kind of feminism is certainly still practiced; its value of modesty used as a shield against unwanted sexualization. Many young Muslim women (and this I know both from my life as a teacher and a watched of cable television) view the *hejab* and other concealing attire as resistance to the probing male gaze, a defense of body, of dignity, and hence of selfhood. But another story about femininity and its relationship to power has been written, a story that doesn't even want to call itself feminist (it calls itself postfeminist sometimes, when it wants to accessorize.)

Along with the problem of women's-movement, feminism being perceived as a dull dresser, is the limitation of its straightness. The notion that women create sexual images of themselves for men's use presumes that men are always involved in women's sexual imagination and behavior. What happens, though, when the body's sexual aesthetic is not just an object but an aspect of a social prac-

tice the values of which undermine systematic masculine bias? Lipstick Lesbians, that's what. Now how is that for the name of a club?

This term originates close to the time, the late seventies and early eighties (think high-fashion busi-



ness suits, think stockings and heels, think expensive manicures) in which the intellectual practice of feminism was dominated by a group of mostly French feminists (among them Julia Kristeva whose work continues to be widely read, and Helene Cixous to whom credit is due for the invention of the phrase *écriture féminine*). Writing the body feminine refers to a set of critical and creative practices. This kind of feminism (but Cixous was already eschewing the term) sought to dismantle the structures of bias in the works of major western thinkers and writers--especially Freud--while at the same time engaging in and deploying the abundant intellectual cur-

rency to be found in the tradition. It also improved the reputation of women writers now considered irresistible whose place in the tradition had been disputed. (Virginia Woolf was objected to most vigorously by American feminists who found her prose too flimsy, her stance too much the victim's, her aesthetic needlessly psychological and sensuous.) Finally there was the task of reauthorizing the female body as a site of pleasure and knowledge, an idea whose themes often ran to the autoerotic and the homoerotic as they do in the prose of Jeanette Winterson:

*She arches her body like a cat on a stretch. She nuzzles my face...like a filly at the gate...She smells of the sea. She smells of rockpools when I was a child...She's refilled each day with fresh tides of longing.*

*...She lies against the light resting her back on a rod of light. The light breaks colors under her eyelids. She want the light to penetrate her, breaking open the dull colds of her of her soul where nothing has warmed her for more summers than she can count. Her husband lies over her like a tarpaulin. (Written on the Body)*

Translated back into the orthodoxy, the straight, monogamous norm, the body of woman, constructed as the image of sexuality,

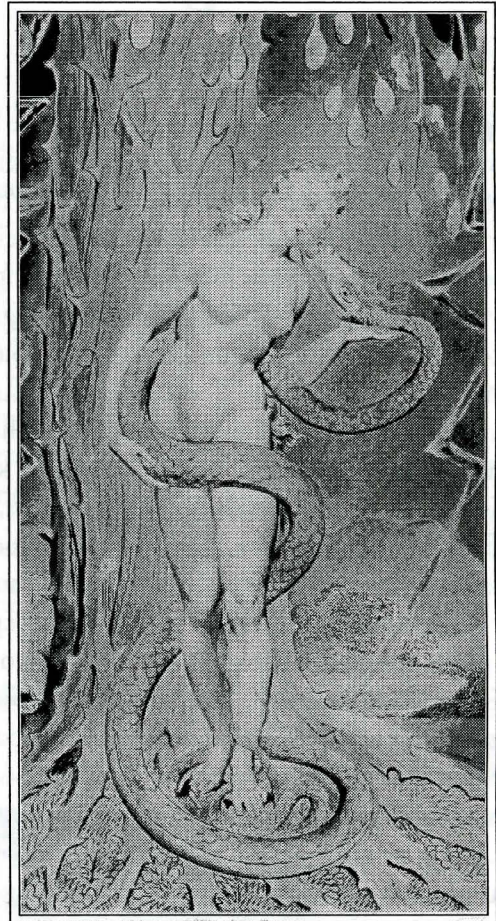


remains cultural property. What woman buys and what she advertises seems to be everybody's business. After all, she isn't a transgressive in a novel, or writing a novel, she is a future mom and wife in whose care we place the culture, in whose image we will raise our daughters (think ten-year-old girls in leather skirts, think middle-school midriff, think Natalie Portman).

In the freshmen course required of all College of New Rochelle students, *The Self in Context: Women, College and Society* (think INS) we read an essay by Susan Douglas called "Narcissism as Liberation" which chides the American woman for having succumbed to that great Satan, advertising, who encouraged her to reinvent beauty as a means of self-love (think "Calgon take me away," think "Clairol because I'm worth it). Woman dressing for herself shows the signs, according to Douglas, of the narcissistic disposition (she digs the way she looks) that prefigures Eve's original sin. Whether due to the power of the market to create our desires, or the authenticity of sexual personae as the element of feminine power, Douglas' message obviously does not enjoy wide subscription. Milton's Eve is a relic of the classroom, but Rough Ryder's Eve changes her hair, her clothes, her

body's shape as successfully as she does her rhythm. And Eve is modesty itself compared to Lil' Kim or the pre-Austin Powers Beyonce (although Eve did have that arresting sort-of-sexual-but-not-really girl-girl encounter with Gwen Stefani).

Yes, we could name the hip-hop diva the figure of postfeminism. She's tough and sexy. She's dyed, implanted, straightened, lifted: she's every bit of sexual attraction money can buy. Everything she does is for herself, and yet she brings pleasure. Likewise the female action hero, be she Zena or Buffy or the chick from *Alias*, who manages to supplement her ruthless look-at-menness by being willing, generally, to thwart evil. Remember Ripley from *Aliens*, scientist turned warrior-woman turned mother, then destroyer of earth's greatest enemy? Or Ally McBeal, unafraid to wear a tiny tiny skirt to court if that's what it takes to serve her client? When women appear to have authored their own sexualization (an authorship that keeps Sephora and Nine West in business), and have figured out how to amass wealth or fame, or represent power in the bargain,



*The Temptation and Fall of Eve,*  
William Blake

this vanguard of gender study postfeminism, applauds.

I am not sure if everyone gets the difference though. Some folks, male and female gazers alike, must have understood that Christina Aguilera as "your genie in the bottle" was Barbara Eden and did want a man in uniform to call master. Perhaps the apotheosis of white postfeminism is Carrie

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# Reclaiming Our Own

Emily Dawn Williams

Vagina. Vagina. Vagina. Yes, that's the word I just said. Now it's your turn. Repeat after me. Nice and clear. No hesitation please. Take a deep breath. Ready? One, two, three. *VAGINA! VAGINA! VAGINA!* Don't you feel better?

Why is it that the word that simply names the sexual and reproductive organ of the female body so often degraded as not appropriate to say and discuss openly? Why a word which describes the first place we travel through regarded as so hush-hush, and all issues which pertain to it silenced? Why is it women perceive themselves as separate from their vaginas, as if it exists in some far external place, certainly not a part of them? You simply cannot take the vagina out of the woman or the woman out of the vagina. The vagina and the woman are integral.

The relationship women have with their vaginas is essential to a woman's relationship with herself. Women have unfortunately been taught to believe their vaginas are solely meant for the purposes of giving men pleasure and to reproducing children. Society expects and demands of women to contribute to the predominantly

negative relationship women have with their vaginas and their sexuality. Women have been led to believe their vaginas do not serve a liberating force of sexual purpose. The vagina's capability to offer sexual pleasure has been neglected as a result of culture's attempts throughout history to repress women keeping their position below men, whereas men's needs and desire for sexual pleasure are generally more openly acknowledged and accepted.

The word penis is generally more easily spoken and discussed openly in comparison to the vagina. The *Webster's New World Dictionary* definition of vagina in comparison to that of penis reinforces the neglect and hesitation to accept women's sexuality in relation to the vagina:

**va-gi-na** n. in female mammals the canal from the vulva to the uterus.

On the other hand, the definition of penis reads:

**pe-nis** n. the male organ of sexual intercourse.

The mention of sexual links to the vagina is completely obliterated in its dictionary definition. Con-

trarily, the word penis is directly linked to sexual content. Why isn't the woman's sexual organ given the description it deserves? Isn't the vagina just as capable to participate in sexual intercourse as the penis?

Women's sexuality deserves to be recognized and liberated so that women develop better relationships with their own vaginas and themselves. It is necessary a community and a forum be provided where women can be free to openly discuss and express issues that pertain to their vaginas and their sexuality.

Such a community and forum is encouraged by *The Vagina Monologues*, a play by Eve Ensler, in which women are awarded with the opportunity to experience and express issues that are traditionally kept silent. *The Vagina Monologues* is a series of different monologues that vary in scope and perspectives of issues which deal with the different types of women and cultures. The issues it deals with range from female genital mutilation, to sexual abuse and rape, to birth. It encourages women to feel comfortable with discussing these issues and promotes women to develop more positive, intimate and accepting relationships with them-



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selves. The monologues empower women with a confident voice to speak out about issues of conflict and concern them in their everyday lives. *The Vagina Monologues* helps women and culture propel towards a better future for women in raising awareness and increasing acceptance of issues which are critical to women's lives.

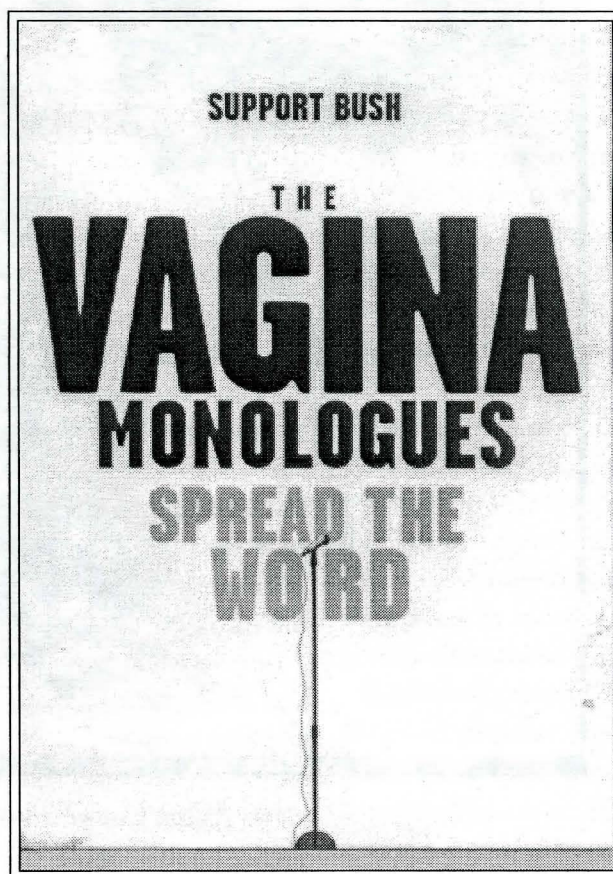
*The Vagina Monologues* has sparked a movement dedicated to stop violence against women and girls called V-DAY. Through V-DAY campaigns, local volunteers and college students produce annual benefit performances of *The Vagina Monologues* to raise awareness and funds for anti-violence groups within their local communities. The College Campaign in particular, further extends a community among young people as students in college, where women's issues raise awareness and are openly discussed. The opportunity provides students with the language to communicate among themselves and their college community about these critical issues, and make a difference in the lives of women.

The path women must take to fully accept themselves is to realize all issues that concern women are indeed important and worthy

of exploration and discussion. Women must acknowledge their responsibility to voice the issues and topics that have been silenced and neglected as unimportant and inappropriate throughout history. We must take control over our vaginas and our sexuality and encourage others, women and men alike, to participate in the journey towards a better future for women.

We must claim our vaginas as our own and not allow them to be controlled or abused by others. We own our vaginas and we own ourselves. Look around, the world is full of vaginas and if it wasn't you wouldn't be here to read this.

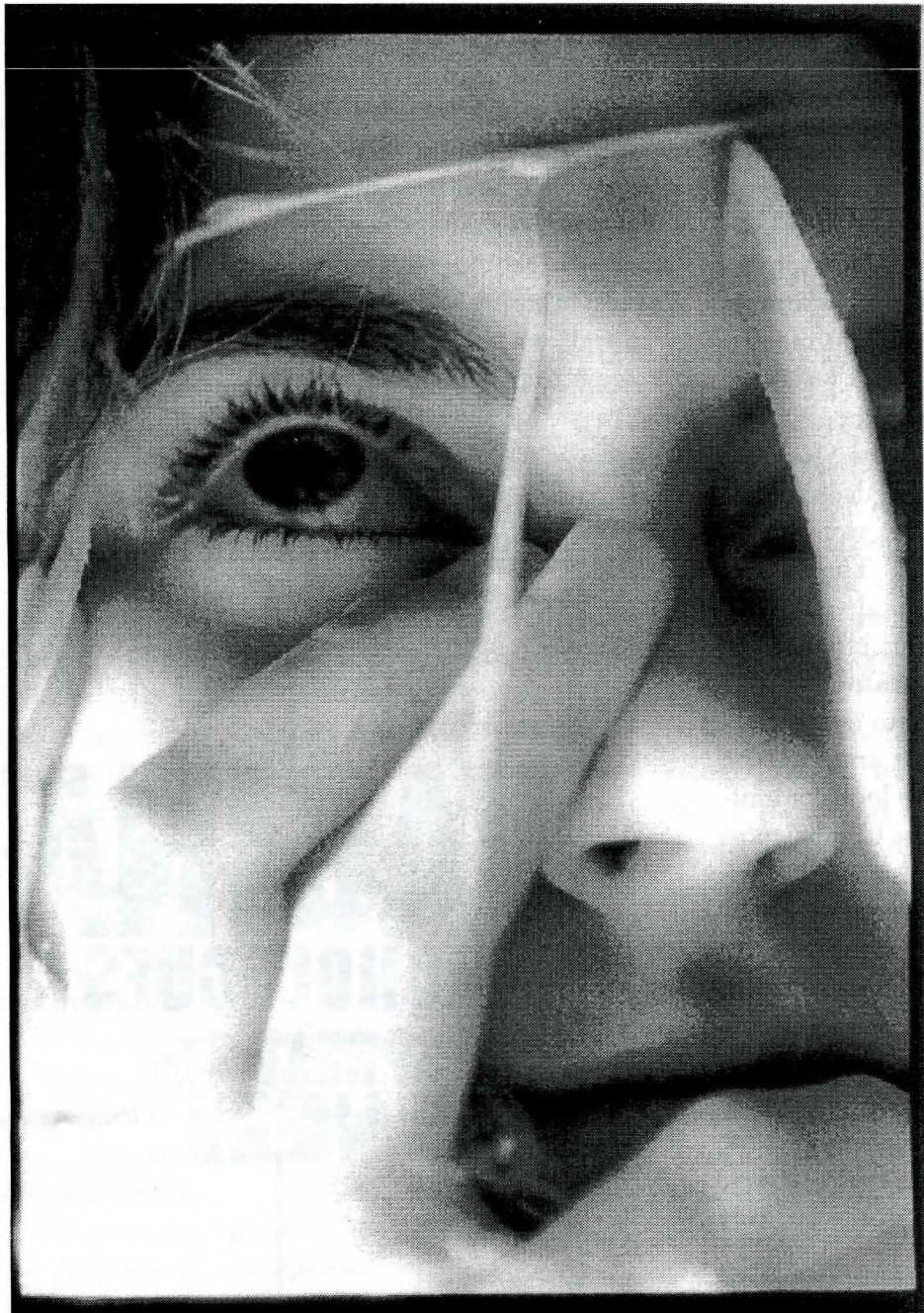
So once again, take a deep breath, and repeat after me: *Vagina*. Isn't it miraculous how easy it was this time?





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Anyone who says he can see through women is  
missing a lot.  
~Groucho Marx



*Sin of Sight*, Laura Wiltshire



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# Psychology of Gender and Mate Selection

Anne Ferrari, Department of Psychology

I was 18 and sitting in my Psychology of Women class filling out my first BSRI, Bem Self Role Inventory. My professor told the class that this instrument would assess our level of femininity, masculinity or androgyny. Desperate to avoid a masculine or androgynous score, I used my psychological knowledge to fill out the survey in a way which assured myself a feminine score, ignoring my professor's remarks that androgynous individuals fared the best psychologically. "What's a masculine typed female?" the woman next to me asked. "One who wears army boots" responded the young man beside me. Somehow, the image of a woman in army boot sounded stylish to me, but I dared not respond. Their comments confirmed my suspicion that feminine typed was definitely the best type to be, at least in 1979.

Now as a professor, I too administer the BSRI to my class, and I often wonder how forthright my students are. I remember the young man who began ripping up the BSRI much to the giggles of his classmates. He had received a feminine score. I reassured him that Sandra Bem actually found feminine traits in males to be associated with more stable marriages in adulthood. And the

young women who asked if androgynous scores mean they're similar to Michael Jackson. I reassure them that androgyny is not a physical trait but a psychological one. I no longer desire a feminine score, in fact, now I manipulate the BSRI to ensure a masculine score, which I think is more chic and attractive. Has our society become more accepting of masculinity within females? Is the ideal woman one who possesses both feminine and masculine traits? Or has the biological process of aging changed my hormonal levels and caused me to become more masculine typed? Many discoveries have occurred in the area of sexuality and gender roles in the last 25 years, some of which look to society to explain sexuality and some which look to biology.

During the mid to late 70's, gender roles were thought to be a result of socialization only. Studies of hermaphrodites revealed that sexually ambiguous infants embraced the gender that they were raised in, despite chromosomal and hormonal deviations from this gender. John Money was considered the pioneer in this field and his research with women who had androgential syndrome (a disorder where chromosomal females were exposed to masculinizing hor-

mones in utero and hence were born with masculinized genitalia) revealed that these individuals remained males, the sex they were raised in, even after learning that they were chromosomally females. Cases such as these were considered strong evidence that gender was socially proscribed. As a result, when a medical accident caused a twin infant boy to lose his penis, both the medical and psychological community were confident that he could be successfully raised as a girl. However, despite his family's provision of strong female socialization, Bruce Reimer was never comfortable in his role as a girl and reverted back to being male upon learning his true sex and medical history during adolescence. In the book, *As Nature Made Him*, we can read the tragic story of a failed gender reassignment, the first evidence to both the medical and psychological community that environment was not the only force acting upon us. The pendulum had swung for society and now biological causes were seen as more predictive of gender than social ones.

Biological theories are currently the most popular explanation for gender roles and mate selection. Sociobiologists use data from animal research and apply it towards

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humans. They believe males and females face different issues with regard to mating and as a result are attracted to different types of partners. For females, who need to devote an enormous amount of time and energy into the raising of her young, it makes sense that she would try to get the best genetic deal with regard to her potential mate. Therefore she is attracted to stronger and healthier males who will give her healthy offspring (which is easier to care for) and who can take care of her while she is vulnerable, such as when nursing. Since each pregnancy is so very time consuming, she needs to be very choosy when picking a mate. For humans, this translates to women who are attracted to males who are dominant, who possess resources and status, and who are likely to have superior genes. Males, on the other hand, must compete for the most fertile females, since fertility will ensure his genetic lineage. Because males are never really sure that the offspring being carried by the female is really theirs, they will try to inseminate as many females as possible. For humans, this translates to males who are more interested in females who are attractive, curvaceous, young and beautiful since these attributes are associated with greater fertility. Sociobiologists believe this explains why men in our society are more promiscu-

ous, whereas women more monogamous and concerned with commitment. Interestingly, research studies of personal ads from the 70s, 80s, and 90s (Deaux & Hanna, 1984, Harrison & Saeed, 1977, Smith, Waldorf, Tremath, 1990) in newspapers revealed women are more likely to describe their physical attributes, such as their attractiveness in their ads while men's ads focus upon their financial resources. These trends have persisted over time. Are these ads giving the opposite sex the biological information that we know they need?

The latest evidence of biological based attraction comes from Swiss biologists studying mate selection. According to these studies, humans avoid inbreeding and try to ensure that their offspring have immune systems diverse enough to fight off as many diseases as possible. Therefore, it follows humans would tend to be attracted to potential mates who are dissimilar to them genetically. Using sweaty T-shirts collected from male volunteers, it was found that women, during their most fertile time of the month, were most attracted to males who were the most genetically different from them. They rated these T-shirts as more pleasant and sexier, never having seen the male who wore it. Interestingly, odors of preferred T-shirts with genetic dissimilarity re-

mined the women of their own mates or former mates. Does our choice of a partner come from our heart or our nose?

If biological factors indeed are the most powerful forces upon us, then men should prefer more curvaceous women, as they indicate better childbearing potential. Although studies have found this to be the case (Fallon & Rozin, 1985), it has also been found that women prefer to be thinner than men would actually like them to be. Perhaps the environment does exert its influence, in fact Barber (1998) found that in times of economic prosperity when women are actively engaged in the workforce, the curvaceousness of women declined, suggesting that careers may override reproduction.

Most likely there is more to how we choose a potential partner than his/her biological fitness. Trends regarding the importance of environmental versus biological factors have changed over time and will probably continue to change in the future. The environment and biology will always interact to affect our definitions of ourselves and the traits we find most attractive in others. However, I can't help but wonder why my 14 year old daughter, in a classroom assignment, listed the traits of "strong, funny, and stupid" in characteristics she liked best about the opposite sex.



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# Are We Different?

Besty Skrip

For reasons still quite unclear to many of us freshmen, INS students are assigned to read Sigmund Freud's overtly sexist essay "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" and then write two pages in which they discuss two of Freud's points with which they agree and two with which they disagree. Besides fueling many colorfully heated dinner conversations, this assignment also offered us the opportunity to refute sexism and defend our position as women.

Freud believed all women, beginning at an early age, develop a sense of inferiority and contempt for their sex simply because they lack a penis-young girls immediately perceive the male organ as "strikingly visible" and "of large proportions," and therefore envy men for possessing penises. Freud also overlooks the fact some women may act masculine in order to gain the rights, respect, and status of men, and instead states this masculine behavior derives from women's universal hope of obtaining a penis.

In my opinion, however; (1) many women do not desire a penis, envy men for their penises, or

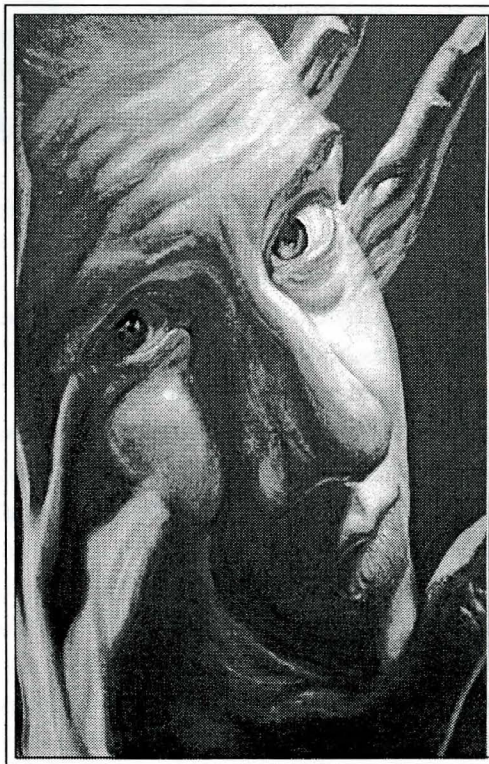
even consider the penis a "superior" organ; (2) any sense of inferiority in women derives from society and/or men, not from their simple lack of a penis; (3) men actually envy women; and (4) men emphasize their penises as denoting power as a defense mechanism for their own sense of vulnerability.

From my own observations, women do not envy men so much for their penises as for that from which their exclusively male anatomy excludes them. So what if men can write their names in the snow without using their hands? In my opinion, women are more resentful, if not envious, of men because men do not suffer the pain, discomfort, mood swings, and debilitating effects of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. In other words, if women envy men at all, they envy them not for what they have-a penis-but because for what they do not have- the inconveniences of the female reproductive cycle.

Men generally tend to

condemn women as "inferior" or "the weaker sex" not because women lack a penis, but because they [men] do not undergo and therefore cannot understand the female physical and emotional cycles. Throughout time, and even today, men have restricted women from upholding certain "male" positions, and rights-none of which require the physical posses-

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*Self Portrait, Margarita Ganeva*

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sion of a penis, but in many cases demand intelligence, strength, courage, and endurance. These are traits that many men (1) believed women did not possess, and (2) convinced many women that they did not possess. Therefore, some women may develop a sense of inferiority not from their lack of a penis, but from the standards, limitations, and prejudices placed upon them by society and men.

Freud portrays the penis as a source of power; however, in my opinion, the penis represents a power of dominance that many men crave but never actually obtain. Freud states it is the threat of castration that provokes young boys to value their penises and develop a "triumphant contempt" for women. To me, however, it seems that these boys, and many men in general, react defensively towards and in fact, envy women because (1) women possess the power to castrate men, and (2) the structures necessary for reproduction in a woman are internal and are therefore less vulnerable than those of a man. Perhaps many men subconsciously consider their actual "triumph" the retention of plausible risk of losing the organ that defines their sex. In that case, the penis would represent a fugitive and susceptible power over castration-not over women as Freud suggests.

Also, men may consider their pe-

nises "superior" because that particular organ endows them the power to impregnate women, whereas women cannot initiate pregnancy within men. However, although men supply the sperm to initiate the fertilization process, they lack the structures to create and nurture new beings within them. In my opinion, many men actually envy and resent the fact that they can only destroy, and not create human life. Therefore, they disparage rather than appreciate women in order to obtain a sense of power that they feel is superior to women's power to create.



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# Deconstructing Difference

Faith Racette

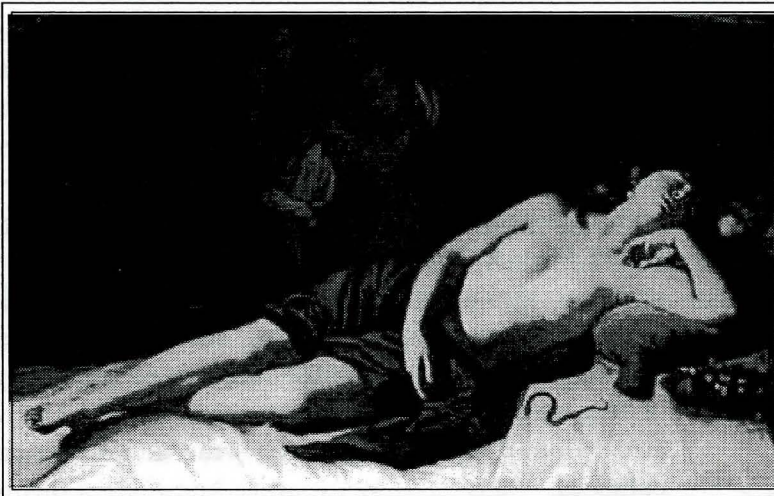
Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* provides an ideal site for an examination of masculine and feminine principles and their complimentary yet contentious relationship as binary oppositions. It explores the scope of their signification on a variety of levels, including the individual and political, and although it is indebted to Greek tragedy in terms of form and theme, *Antony and Cleopatra* en-

realm will not allow for equanimity.

Camille Paglia's book, *Sexual Personae* supports Shakespeare's

element of entrapment in female sex, a subliminal manipulation leading to physical and emotional infantilization of the male"(26).

Paglia perceives this dynamic in every sexual relationship, and in the beginning of Shakespeare's play it appears Cleopatra fits into this sexual stereotype of control over and deception of the masculine. This is evident when she speaks to her maidservant of Antony, "if you



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*Cleopatra*, Artemisa Gentileschi

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courages an outlook on gender that is much more comprehensive and sophisticated. Through the parallel relationships of Cleopatra and Antony and Egypt and Rome, Shakespeare depicts a fluid resolution and replacement of these conflicting principles. The struggle between the masculine and feminine reveals primal tendencies toward violence, which cannot be entirely suppressed, and although harmony is attained on the individual level, the political

observation of conflict between genders. She asserts in her first chapter, "Sex and Violence, or Nature and Art," the sexual relationship is fraught with discord and when sexual freedom is sought or achieved, sadomasochism must accompany it. Issues of power and control arise and violence becomes an unavoidable part of the relationship. She states, "The sexes are eternally at war. There is an element of attack, of search-and-destroy in male sex...there is an

find him sad,/ Say that I am dancing: if in mirth, report/ That I am sudden sick"(9). She appears to make use of the 'feminine' tools of manipulation and cunning.

However, on closer examination, it is evident that Cleopatra and Antony achieve a more reciprocal relationship. They begin to share an identity, rather than fight for power over each other. The lines of Act I Scene II support this unity in word and action. The lovers embrace as Antony declares,

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"Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch/ Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space./ Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike/ feeds beast as man: the nobleness of life/ is to do thus; when such a mutual pair/ and such a twain can do't, in which I bind,/ On pain of Punishment, the world to weet/ We stand up peerless."

He uses the equalizing word, "mutual," and discusses the power that they possess together. The last line of his speech is grammatically balanced as he uses "we" instead of the power seeking "my" which begins the statement. They are both the subject, and together are prepared to use their strength against another object Rome. In Antony's statement, the masculine and feminine dichotomy diminishes.

However, Paglia's inevitable gender struggle does not disappear in *Antony and Cleopatra*. It takes on a dynamic that is much larger than the individual. The unified Cleopatra and Antony emerge on another level as they become a metonymy for Egypt. Concurrently, the thoroughly patriarchal figures in the text begin to reflect Rome, the opposing place. The places in the text, while avoiding reduction, become characters themselves, and appropriate the attributes of masculine and feminine.

The characters of Caesar, Agrippa, and his other followers indirectly imbue Rome with the

masculine, first through an association with other stereotypically defined 'masculine' characteristics, and then indirectly through their treatment of the feminine. The lines of Act II Scene VI clearly link Rome to the consequential entity of civilization. It is viewed as a dominant and essential location, and in fact becomes the only place as it amplifies itself by tremendous proportions. The scene operates with Enobarbus discussing the triumvirate of Caesar, Lepidus, and Antony, and the drunk Lepidus is being carried away. He says, "A' bears the third part of the world, man; see'st not?" Lepidus represents the city of Rome which in turn is not just a place, but civilization itself. It is the definition of order and duty, and through this association, it is thoroughly masculinized.

The masculine dominance in Rome can also be observed through the characterization of women by the Roman aspect of the play. Fulvia and Octavia are both models of Roman decorum, rarely speaking and paying close attention to duty. For instance, at the end of Act II Scene III, Maecenas, one of Caesar's followers, states Octavia's attributes with the words, "If beauty, wisdom, modesty, can settle/ The heart of Antony, Octavia is/ A blessed lottery to him"(29). He pronounces the qualities of a truly civilized woman.

In the beginning of the next act, Octavia further supports this classification by pronouncing the dutiful statement, "All which time/ Before the gods my knee shall bow my prayers/ To them for you"(29). She lowers herself in physical and psychic stature by becoming the object which supports rather than acts.

The characters' attitudes toward Cleopatra, who is the antithesis of these proper women, also uncovers Rome as a masculine place. Shakespeare draws on ancient literature, especially tragedy, to create this suspicious attitude toward foreign or unconventional femininity. The tragedian Euripides in his play *Medea*, endorses Paglia's view of femininity as an "entrapment"(26). The title character, as the unconventional woman, acknowledges this negative view of the feminine with the words, "women, though most helpless in doing good deeds, are of every evil the cleverest of contrivers"(408) and "a man is easier to deal with than the clever type,"(320). As with *Medea*, Cleopatra's cleverness and ingenuity is seen by the masculine Rome as dangerous and even evil.

The feminine location in *Antony and Cleopatra* is determined by Cleopatra, who is a metonymy for Egypt and nature throughout the entire play. Therefore, the numerous descriptions of her can often be ascribed to the country. Her



relationship to Egypt is further maintained by her elevation to a more than human status. This can be observed in Act I Scene II, when Enobarbus equates Cleopatra's emotions to the elemental alterations of Jove. He states,

"her passions are made of nothing but the finest/ part of pure love: we cannot call her winds and waters sighs and/ tears: they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can/ report: this cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove"(8).

This also connects her to the natural, which Paglia states is securely attached to the feminine. Her tears are associated with the changes of weather, yet they are not merely the typical winds and waves. Her feelings are as great as tempests and she controls these storms as do the gods. This place, which Cleopatra represents, clearly occupies a position of status and power.

The previously quoted lines from Act I Scene I, when Antony describes their complimentary relationship, clearly situate Cleopatra as both individual and a location. He says, "Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch/ Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space"(2). He admits the surrender of the masculine, "Rome" into itself, and he simultaneously places himself in Egypt and in Cleopatra's embrace.

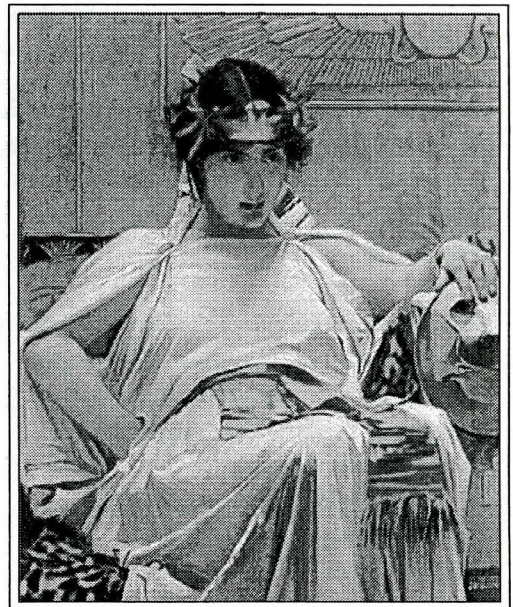
While Cleopatra and Antony manage to overcome the obstacles regarding gender, these larger models incorporate Paglia's issues of violence, destruction and control. Egypt and Rome are in continual conflict and must eventually act upon these tendencies. They do so in the form of war. Egypt attempts a unification with the Rome that will strip her of direct control and will demand the Octavian-type submission that the civilized female is expected to welcome.

This struggle for unification not only creates violence on the scale of location but also on the individual with the relationship of the lovers. Cleopatra's and Antony's androgynous power and their contentment in a feminine place cannot last. Both characters attempt to imitate their gender-unified relationship in the form of place by making connections to Rome. Antony makes the first endeavor when he marries Octavia, a piece of Rome. Cleopatra then follows his example with her "betrayal" of Antony.

Through their actions toward Rome, the two characters cause the disintegration of their passionate union. The break becomes obvious in Antony's speech in Act IV Scene XII. He laments, "All is lost;/ This

foul Egyptian hath betrayed me:/ ...Betray'd I am./ Oh this false soul of Egypt! This grave charm,/ Whose eye beck'd forth my wars and call'd them home...Like a right gypsy hath at fast and loose/ Beguiled me to the very heart of loss"(89). He begins the statement with despair as he realizes the magnitude of the split between them. He sees that the space which they once occupied together, that of Egypt, can no longer be his. He marks this shift by returning to the individual language of "me" and "I." Antony now joins in Rome and assigns to Cleopatra the qualities of the foreign woman, the Medea. With the phrase, "beguiled me to the very heart of loss," she becomes the clever one, whose

*Continue on pg. 39*



*Cleopatra, John Williams Waterhouse*



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# *Ecriture Feminine: Writting the Body Feminine*

Cynthia Kraman, Department of English.

The poems below were written when I was just a little older than my students at CNR. The year after I graduated, while I had a sales job in the city, I felt rather isolated, and took my first writing class with Daniel Halpern at the New School. The poems I wrote in that workshop included "Your Last Experiment" which appeared in the *The Paris Review* and "The New Order," published in *Antaeus*. These pieces, eventually published in *Taking on the Local Color* (Wesleyan University Press) were some of my own early efforts at *écriture féminine* which was even then in the process of being invented. The most important single phrase of that literature is Helene Cixous' exhortation from *The Laugh of the Medusa*: "Write!" It's still a great battle cry.

## Your Last Experiment

You shaved your hair off and waited for  
the regeneration of ringlets,  
the development of waves,  
the slow invisible shaft growing  
in the white fallow, the unknown field,  
of your skull.

In the drawing room you sat shaven  
among cleavages rank with sweat.  
You wore a black feather boa, a sequined dress.  
Slowly the first grayness hovered, an image  
darkening under the light, under the hypo  
above the gray masses of the brain  
it sprouted.

You told them you were a scientist, an artist;  
that you were sure God hear your prayers.  
You told them it felt like sandpaper,  
don't touch it, well, all right.  
They adjusted the lamp so the light fell  
on all the tiny nightsprung shoots,  
and the ladies passed their hands  
back and forth,

back and forth,  
over the stubble.

At first it formed patterns like seaweed  
clinging to a rock.  
You wondered when it grew back  
if it might turn traitor,  
refuse the firm command  
of brush and comb.  
You whimpered in your sleep.

You wore a white shirt as we sat by the sea  
and picked up a shell bright as a mirror.  
"Oh, no," you said, "I've missed it,  
it's grown back overnight!"  
And you stood twisting a curl under the  
summer sun,  
and your mouth made a little moue,  
your mouth,  
as pink  
as a pink pebble.



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## The New Order

*The settler...ascertains bitterly, "They want to take our place." It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place.*

—Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

This is the way we used to serenade each other:  
I love the intensity of your absences,  
the lament of used clothes, whispering,  
even as you walk,  
even in the sloughing off  
of sandals during summer;  
I love your blouse.  
This is the way we used to wound each other, gently,  
vacationing by the sea:  
I saw you yesterday—  
I didn't know it was you,  
until you disappeared.

Sometimes they said:  
In her profile  
Nefertiti lives again (Gerhard agreed).  
And Louis: The geometry of her ears is very chic.  
They watched us through the windows in the rain.

Outside we licked the air,  
lifting salamanders by their tails.  
Gerhard, go to sleep, we laughed  
rubbing one's undersides.  
Louis, pray you go to heaven.  
We thought of our oppressors in these ways:  
They were furniture.  
We would arm ourselves.  
They were amusing and might do the gardening.

We laughed about it later, with mama.

We laughed about it later, when they read the will.  
She'd left it, tout a fait, to us.  
To us her chairs, theater tickets, house;  
We rearranged the library while undressing.

Ouf, you said, (a high-heeled boot slipped off):  
certain fictions disappeared.  
We worked our way through shelves and stays,  
essays, garters, religious works.  
The spaniel played among the crinolines.

While we put our house in order,  
they began to argue in the sun over cravats,  
grew graceful,  
slouched on benches turning, to tan more evenly.  
Played prim,  
set each on each  
until the lawn buzzed  
with all the honey of discontent.

At tea it was Louis who fled the room in tears.

I see you clearly now.  
You give them help and guidance,  
a bit of discipline.  
They soothe us in the evening at the harpsichord.  
Laughing,  
jostling each other in the kitchen,  
their voices remind us of the bells at Angelus,  
of nectarines.  
They bring us such relief from all our daily cares.



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# Medea: The Case of Envy (or Perverse Motherhood?)

Vera Cherynsheva

"She was a good mother. Something just got into her, the devil or something." This heavily psychoanalytic statement was released to the *New York Times* by a family friend of Olga Lorena Valdez, who suffocated her two daughters with a pillow while they slept (*New York Times*, 22 November 2002). Some suggested that the mother was suffering from postpartum depression. The mourning husband and father—the same man who was loudly arguing with his wife night before the murder—made no comment. Whether the interviewees' statements come from breast envy—the quoted contributor is male—or from the sexist ideology spoken in medical lingo, the psychology of motherhood is obviously intimidating. Especially when it comes to maternity, Freud's studies of women, rooted in the deep bias of earlier centuries, are still a part of our ideological apparatus.

Here are other headlines which tell of mothers' destinies. "Judging a Mother for a Crime by Someone Else"—a tale of a wrongly convicted Tabitha Pollock (*New York Times*, 27 November 2002). "Breakthrough in Child Beating Case"—a case whose only evi-

dence against Madelyne Gorman-Toogood are security tapes in Mishawaka Kohl's parking lot ([www.wndu.com/news](http://www.wndu.com/news), 20 September 2002). "Texas Jury Convicts Mother Who Drowned Her Children"—a record of a trial hearing of Andrea Pia Yates which did not take longer than four hours (*New York Times*, 13 March 2002).

We find bad mothers fascinating, and on primetime TV, funny as hell! Just think of the overbearing Marie Barone on CBS's *Everybody Loves Raymond*. How about the ever-so-present—but dead—mother of Dr. Frasier Crane on NBC's *Frasier*? *Friends* is like a convention for the survivors of poor parenting. Finally, there is some hope for WB's Lorelai Gilmore, who is too sexy to be a mom anyway (she is one of the two *Gilmore Girls*), but have you see her mother? You get the picture.

Recently, the Brooklyn Academy of Music welcomed a sensational production of Seneca's *Medea* directed by Deborah Warner of the Abbey Theatre. The truly Roman preference for slaughter and theatricality pleased the voyeuristic tastes of the American audience enough to prompt the consideration of moving the show to

Broadway. Despite Seneca's misogyny and his text's numerous references to Medea's hysteria, this *Medea*, played by Fiona Shaw, was portrayed as a rational woman who has been abandoned and betrayed. Shaw's performance demands an exploration of Medea's envious motivations (envy as described by Freud's loyal but revisionist disciple Melanie Klein), and an evaluation of the contemporary values her interpretation releases (as focused by Julia Kristeva's *Tales of Love*.)

Unlike Euripides's plot-driven *Medea*, Seneca's version is character-based. His heroine comes with a baggage. In the very argument (think introduction, better yet, previews) of the play, Medea's barbaric heritage is introduced. She is a princess of Colchis who commits many a murder to assist her beloved, Jason, in his quest for the Golden Fleece. Her barbaric nature is the outcome of racial identity. In Corinth, where the events take place, she is an outsider, the feared, unknown Other. Her gods are pagan and her tools are snakes and dragons.

Medea's first speech is spellcasting to awake the Furies—spirits that punish crimes, espe-

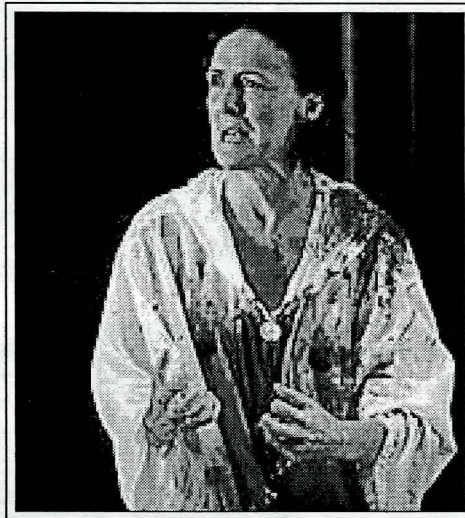


cially those committed within and against the family. Jason's crime is infidelity. He is preparing, while still married to Medea, to wed the local king's daughter, either for love or stature. This causes Medea, already seen as "wild, monstrous, impious," to come undone. "She runs now here, now there, with frantic rush, marks of distracted passion in her face." Her hate draws strength from love. Her "anger and love have joined cause."

The psychological development of the character is driven by envy, which, according to Melanie Klein, is a projective emotion. In other words, in her love, Medea does not become the romantic Other, but projects the ruinous motives of her own character onto the beloved, spoiling him since she can't have him to herself. So, when destroying the parts of the Other which cause anxiety, she is also punishing the hated parts of her self. "If in my womb," she says, "there still lurk any pledge of thee, I'll search my very vitals with the sword and hale it forth." Here, Medea not only plans to castrate Jason as her sexual partner, but also ruin herself as a mother—she plans a self-administered hysterectomy. This is why Jason and her sons become the vehicles of Medea's vengeance, and in Seneca's version she identifies these means

in her very first speech. The children are the only record of this marriage and the history of Medea's crime.

After the vengeful course is set and one of the sons is already slain, Medea speaks of reincarnation. "Restored is my kingdom, my ravished virginity is restored." Klein tells us that "envy is directed



Fiona Shaw as Medea

against creativeness." Once Medea's sons, creations of her union with Jason, are destroyed, her envious drive is satiated and her ideal self is restored. Seneca's plot, however, does not make clear whether Medea converts to conventional morality. At the end, when she flees Corinth for Athens, she does not repent or experience guilt. She remains the barbaric lover and mother.

Contemporary interpretation, as illustrated by Shaw's performance, allows more sympathy for Medea, more identification (projective or otherwise) with her actions and morality. As a contemporary lover, Medea desires that her marital union remain a legal entity. "The reason may be that the law, which is external to the subject, is an area of power and attraction that can merge with the Ego Ideal," writes Julia Kristeva in *Tales of Love*. Ego Ideal represents each individual's recognition of the Father as his or her own prehistory; it is the law of the Father. In the case of Medea, who has abandoned her family and country for the sake of Jason, the law of marriage is the only set of rules that link her to a foreign patrimony.

Like all psychoanalytic topoi, *Medea* is a tale of passion and love. In Greece, Jason, as a husband and caretaker, represents both father and mother to Medea. In her home country, Medea has proved herself able to take on the same roles. So, according to contemporary understanding, the union between Jason and Medea is ideal. It allows for the interchange of genders, the exchange of culturally coded roles. Kristeva calls such marriage perverse. She writes that "perversion alone is in control of the situation, binding in self-esteem partners

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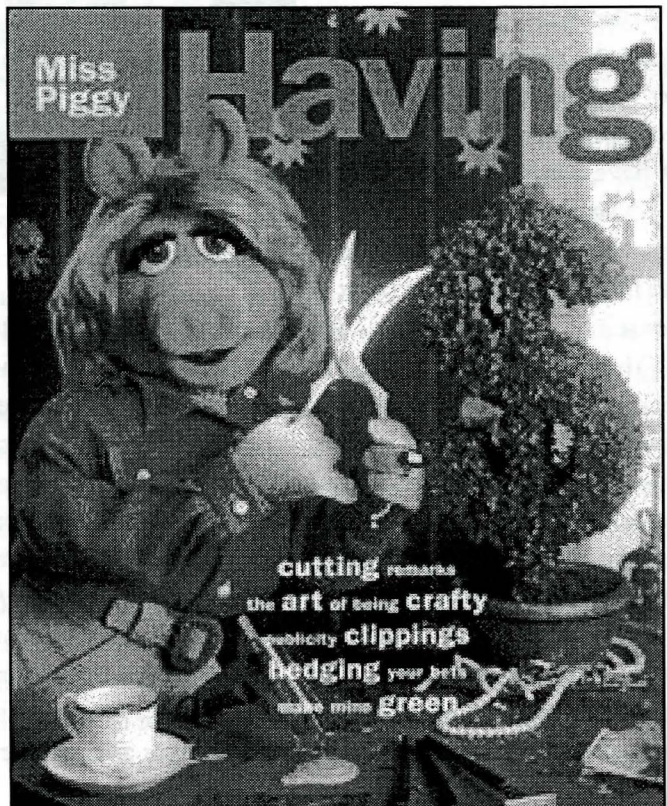
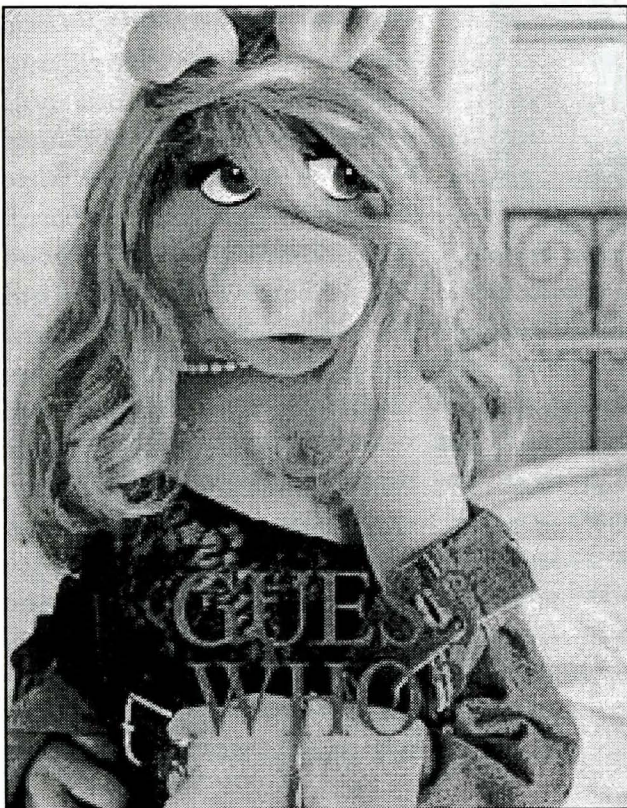


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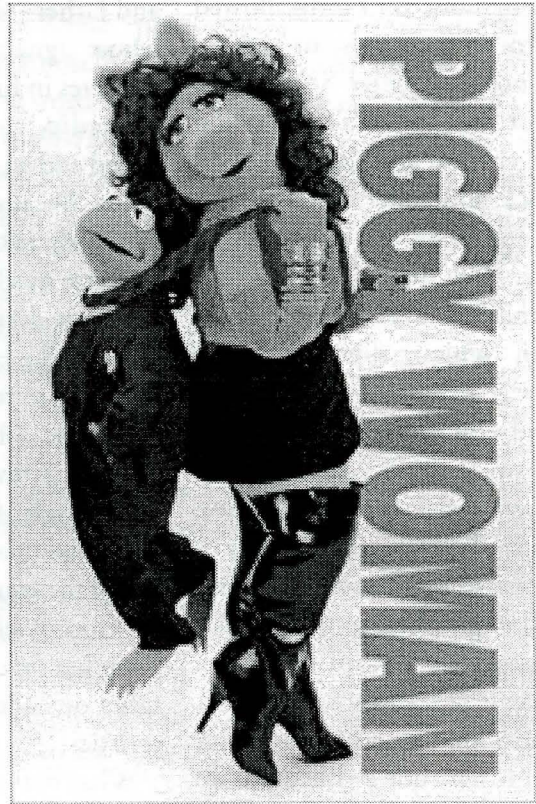
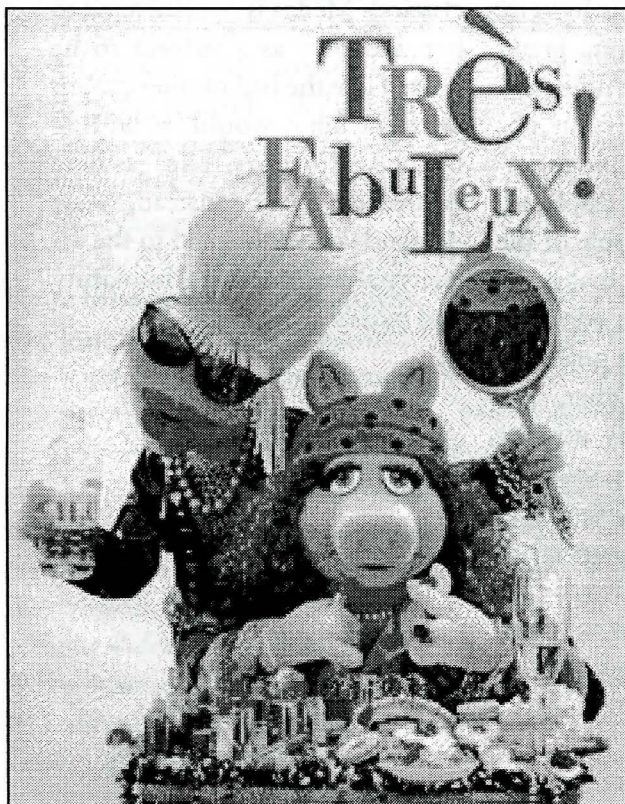
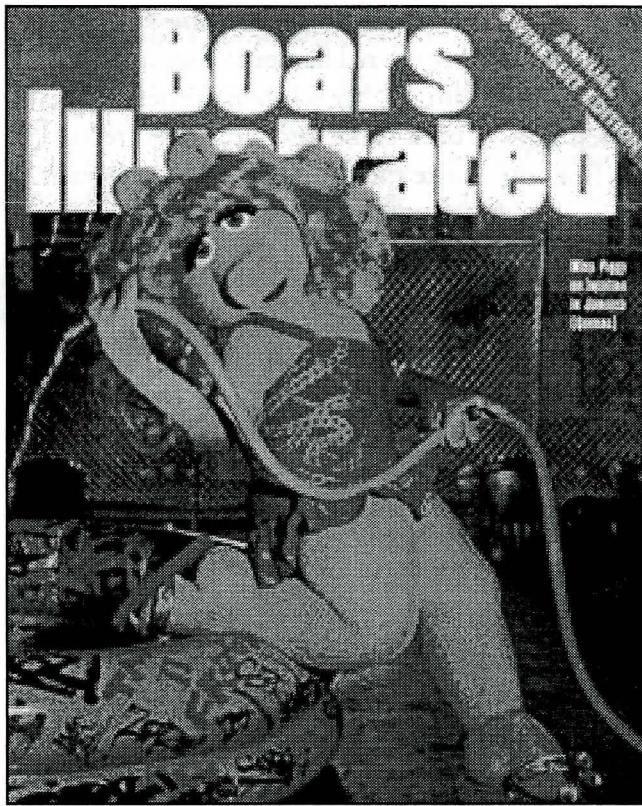
# The Evolving Feminist Icon

I've been around since the seventies, (I was just a piglet then you know) enjoying fun rallies with my dear friend Gloria, trying to get Kermy to marry me, even when I have to go on location. (It's hard to try to balance a career and a personal life.) Now, I have to compete against Martha as the new domestic goddess. Remember, my motto has always been simple. It's all about moi.

Until next time,  
Miss Piggy  
xoxoxoxo







graphic credit: [www.muppetcentral.com/cards/parody.shtml](http://www.muppetcentral.com/cards/parody.shtml)



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*New Looks, continued*

Bradshaw and company, the girls from *Sex and the City*, each trying in her own fashion to edge closer, through shoe-shopping, husband hunting, bed hopping, and smoking in her underwear, to that old beam of the male gaze. Apparently, in its eroticism, its intellectual rigor, and its agenda of radical transformation, Lipstick Feminism stamped its own expiration date. We are in too much of a hurry to waste time deconstructing before getting dressed. Fashion only equals sex when we say it does. I can't be exploited if I claim I'm not. And why do we always have to analyze everything anyway? It's just how I look. Ok?

Ok. I'll give up on the history, the theory, but am I only allowed to think in garments, or can we get conceptual here? Somewhere in all of this, in Eve's face staring up at her from an Edenic pool, in the rock and roller's redemption from ennui by the shimmering quench (like disco lemonade) of the feminine, in the vicissitudes of fashion (which, after all, goes a long way toward explaining the wardrobe of women's-movement feminism; it was the sixties, dressing down mattered), is the notion of beauty. Why turn the beauty of the feminine against women, feminism thought. Let her use it to her advantage, postfeminism urges. We may well be on schedule for a discovery that beauty is not best used but felt, not a thing but an

imaginative act. Would our culture ever allow us to bring word images and movement to such a discovery, or is that a dream from the past?

*Medea, continued*

who are tied to such and such a partial object furnished by the other, or to such and such an active-passive, masculine-feminine alternation provided by erotic or existential dramatic art."

The maternity structured by this perverse matrix—a merging of the complicated functions of mother and father—is ideal for a hysteric whose signature symptom, Freud observes in his earliest studies, is a monadic, tunnel focus, an obsessed and anxious gaze and movement. Because Medea is displaced, she easily takes on the role of the perverse mother. What makes the marriage destructive for Medea is that, unlike Jason, she is unable to replace the romantic Other. Because the self is already missing from Kristeva's "father-mother-and-myself" formula of ideal love, when father and mother are taken out of the equation the heroine has no ground left on which to stand. Even her revenge, the infanticide, takes on sadomasochistic characteristics.

What makes this contemporary

*Stepping Stones, continued*

see the red flames and we smell the smoke. We relish in the heat. Turn back some say, but no we recognize the fire. Realize we have just as much right to get burnt as he does.

interpretation irresistible is that this Medea does not fit any category. She is a completely autonomous heroine, irreplaceable as the engine of her story's unfolding, much like Thomas Pynchon's tragically named heroine Oedipa Mass (how refreshing for an American artist to learn from the classics). Medea is not delivered to her audience as a subject to be judged like the bad mother caught on film. That would be adding hypocrisy to envy, like gasoline poured on a fire. Instead, Shaw demands notice be paid to the archetypal antiheroine's humanity and pathos.



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### *Antony and Cleopatra continued from pg.31*

only strength is deception. However, even in this degraded situation, Cleopatra manages to retain an interesting remnant of power. Through the subtle use of the relative, "whose" at the end of the passage, she remains subject and he becomes the pitiable object.

With Antony's death, Cleopatra realizes the impossibility of occupying the masculine and the feminine spheres in both the individual and the political. A few of Antony's last words are, "One word, sweet queen:/ Of Caesar seek your honour, with your safety. O!" And she replies, "They do not go together"(98). He still dreams of a unification with Rome and hopes it will secure her safety, but she recognizes the folly in his statement. They will constantly struggle for control. With him dies the only instance of gender resolution in the play, and it cannot be regained.

Cleopatra's goal now is to save Egypt from being forced to endure the humiliation of submission. She is not willing to allow Rome's control; therefore, she finally begins to step into Paglia's assigned role. She embraces the power struggle between genders and takes on the attributes of a manipulative woman, in order to avoid the greatest defeat, that of marching in the triumphal parade in Rome as a slave. When speaking with Caesar, after her apparent defeat,

she utilizes these manipulative tactics. She states, "Sole sir o' the world,/ I cannot project mine own cause so well/ To make it clear; but do confess I have/ Been laden with like frailties which before/ Have often shamed our sex"(107). She speaks as if she agrees with his and Rome's claim to sole importance. She first addresses him with a flattering title then diminishes her own worth and that of all women in an attempt to retain her country's integrity.

At the close of the play, Cleopatra completely embraces Paglia's categorizations, and through her most violent act, the one turned toward herself, she overpowers the masculine state, and makes it impossible for Rome to control Egypt. Caesar himself admits her victory with the words, "Bravest at the last,/ She levell'd at our purposes, and being royal/ Took her own way"(114). Although Rome still lives, it is forced to relinquish its fleeting hold over Egypt. Cleopatra is laid to rest beside her beloved Antony, and the "pair so famous"(115) are united in death.

The issue of gender dissolution is highly problematic in the works of Camille Paglia as well as Shakespeare. Paglia's theory does not offer a resolution of gender inequality and difference, whereas Shakespeare, attempts a solution, only to conclude that what is pos-

sible on an individual level, may not hold true for the communal or political. Through the metonymy of place and character, he provides an accurate reflection of gender struggles, allowing the audience to see past themselves and contemplate the impression of such issues on the larger community.

The text extensively quoted was Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, published by Dover Press.

*Growing up Virgin, continued*  
those of you that have never seen, is on the WB. I stopped watching when everyone started having insignificant sex. What is the message this show is promoting?

We as a society and as women are bombarded with *images of sex*. On the MTV reality show *The Real World* rarely is there a virgin living in the house and when there is the roommates usually take it upon themselves to "corrupt" the virgin.

Sex shouldn't be taken lightly. It's a big deal. You don't want to have sex because everyone you know is doing it, you don't want to be pressured into it. Have sex because it's right, because it feels right and your ready.

I'm not saying *don't have sex*. Sex is great and we're all sexual beings I'm just saying take your time and be safe.



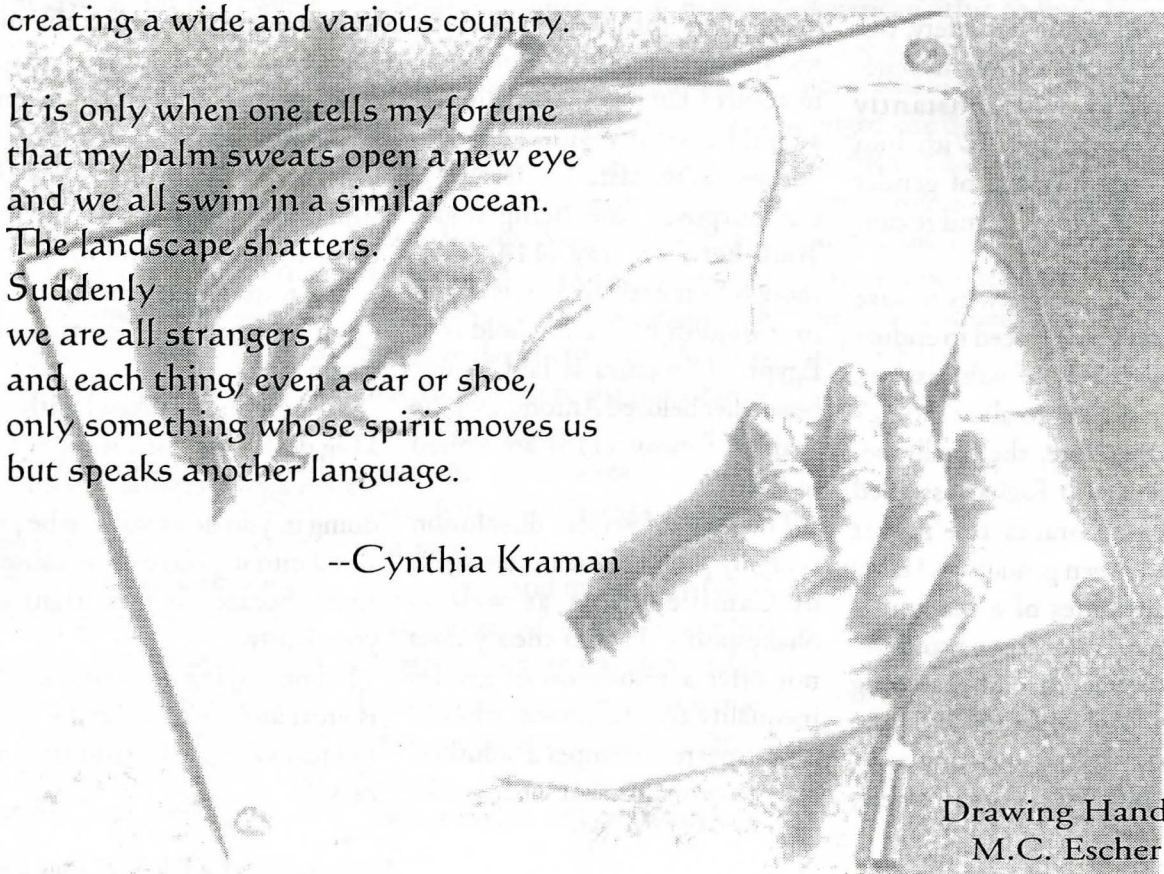
## Le Sorelle

From their window they see these things:  
their hands,  
the shadow of their hands,  
a striped umbrella going out to sea.  
The day trembles over the acacia bush.  
They have not noticed below the window  
a scarlet motorbike.

From the window to the darkness they turn  
and go downstairs.  
Then I think: a collection of white hills has left me,  
or  
a certain sentence  
has lost its punctuation.  
Over the banister I hear them move.  
They speak,  
creating a wide and various country.

It is only when one tells my fortune  
that my palm sweats open a new eye  
and we all swim in a similar ocean.  
The landscape shatters.  
Suddenly  
we are all strangers  
and each thing, even a car or shoe,  
only something whose spirit moves us  
but speaks another language.

--Cynthia Kraman



Drawing Hands,  
M.C. Escher